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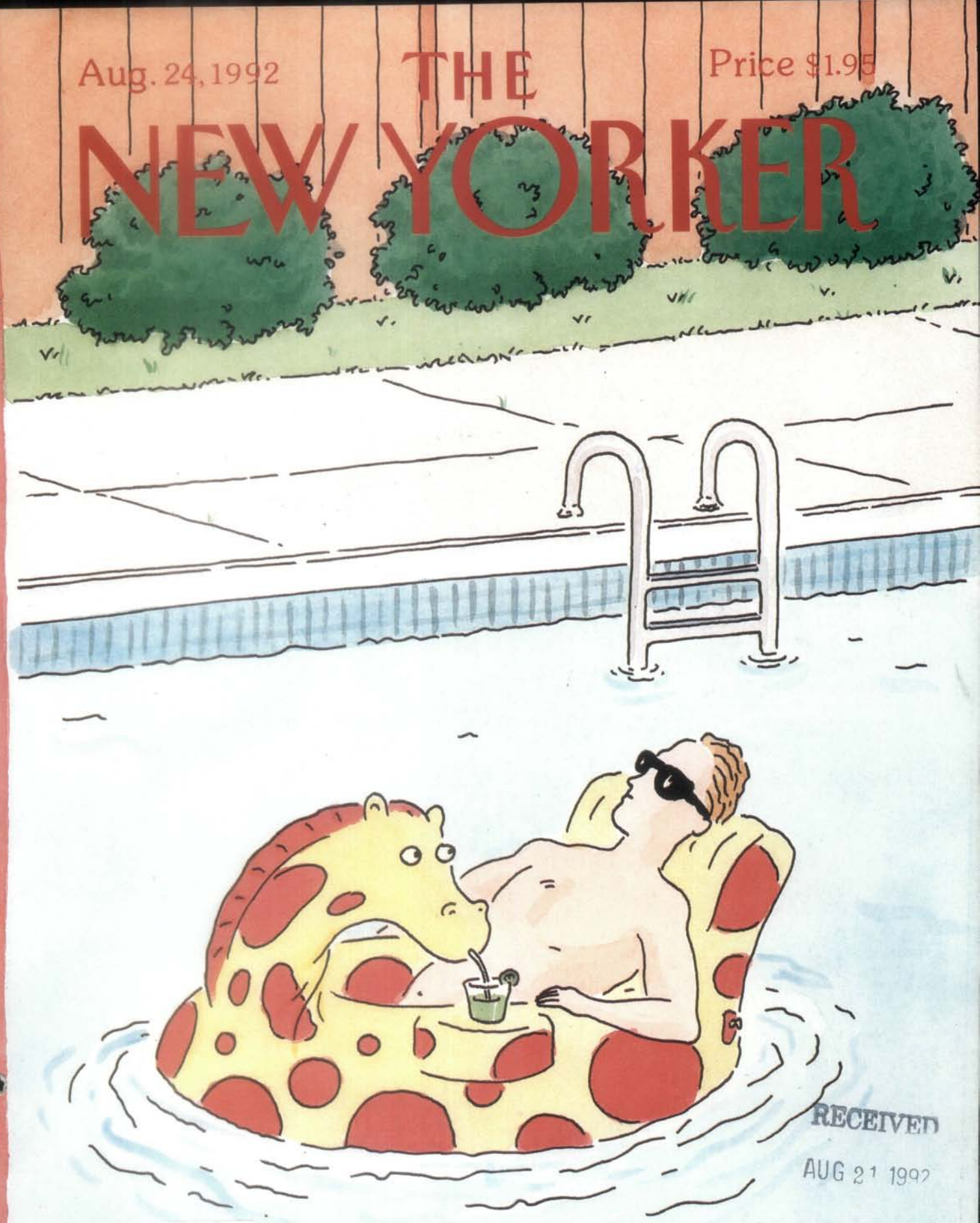

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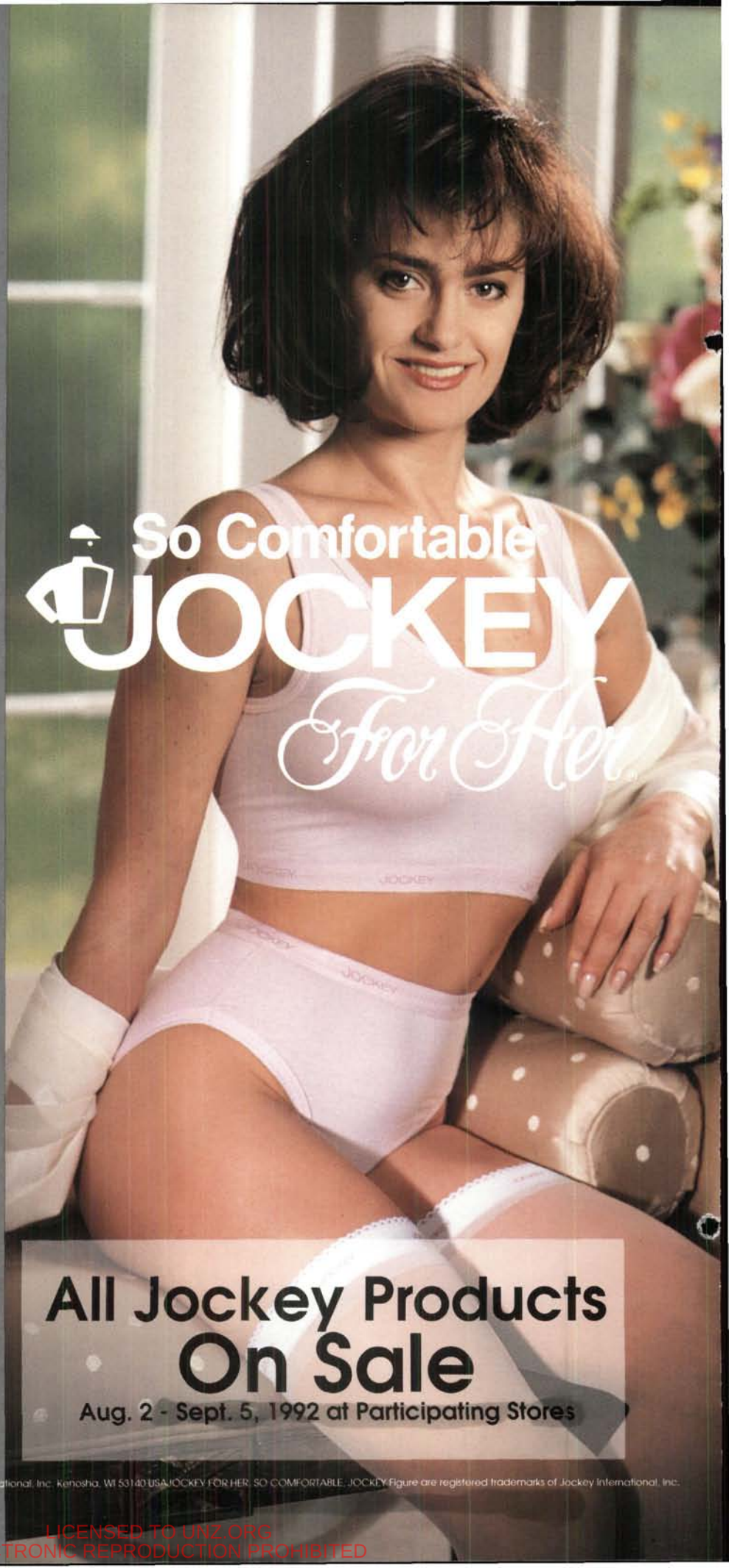

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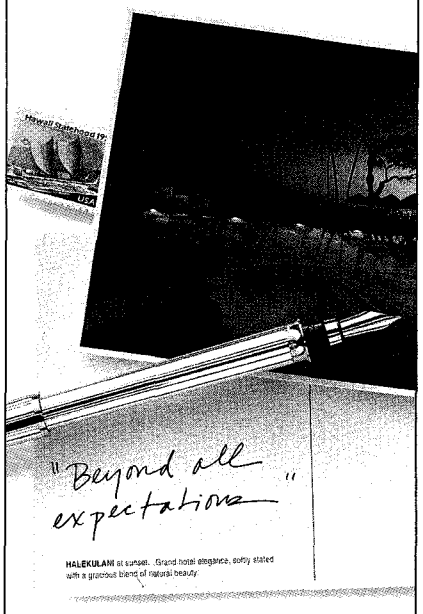

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

IN every interview with an actor, the subject eventually starts talking about the moment when the professional die was cast—when everything except the prospect of a career on stage or screen seemed inconceivable. For Michelle Banks, whose production "Black Women's Stories: One Deaf Experience" continues through Sunday, at LaGuardia Community College, the epiphany occurred at the movies. The film was "Sounder," with Cicely Tyson, and, though Miss Banks isn't completely certain, the pivotal scene may have been Miss Tyson's long, burstingly emotional run down the road to greet her home-coming husband. Though Miss Banks was only six at the time and had already appeared onstage, she didn't waste time getting into high gear. She acted in plays at Shiloh Baptist Church, in Washington, D.C., did a five-year stint in a group called the Children's Urban Arts Ensemble, and worked off and on in television and movies, where her intense gestures and lens-scorching gaze became trademarks. (It's no surprise to learn she has a part in "Malcolm X.") Three years ago, Miss Banks founded the Onyx Theatre Company, whose elegant name she explains thus: "Black for the color of our skin. Stone for our deafness."

Onyx's "Black Women's Stories" is a mosaic of texts, by Alice Walker, Maya Angelou, and Toni Morrison, among others, and a playlet ("Ain't I a Woman?") by Lisa Weems and Ann Marie Bryan, the evening's director. Miss Banks' contribution outlines the life story of one Azealea Brown. "As Azealea," the actress says, "I go through a public school where I am the only deaf child and where I am mocked by the hearing children. I get sent to an asylum, because I pee in front of the class. Azealea's story is about a lot of common struggles—growing up, dealing with men, abortion." "Black Women's Stories" also features Opal Gordon and two voice interpreters.

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

Anna Karenina—A musical by Peter Kellogg (book and lyrics) and Daniel Levine (score), which is based on Tolstoy's novel. Ann Crumb, Melissa Errico, Gregg Edelman, Scott Wentworth, John Cunningham, and Jerry Lanning lead the cast. Previews through Aug. 25. Opens Aug. 26 at 6:45. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

Distant Fires—A play by Kevin Heelan, which was seen last season at the Atlantic Theatre. In previews. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.)

OPENED RECENTLY

The Best of Forbidden Broadway—This tenth-anniversary edition of Gerard Alessandrini's long-running, ever-fluctuating musical revue is, as one might expect, a treat. There is some new material, but our favorite sequences are still the spoof of "M. Butterfly" and the "Speed-the-Plow" number, "Madonna's Brain," in which David Mamet and Ron Silver try to teach Madonna to act and she ends up tearing off most of her clothes.

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23	24	25	26			

Ann Crumb and Scott Wentworth in "Anna Karenina"

(Reviewed in our issue of 5/4/92.) (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

Black Women's Stories: One Deaf Experience—Michelle Banks' production, presented by the Onyx Theatre Company. (Little Theatre, LaGuardia Community College, 31-10 Thomson Ave., Long Island City. Aug. 22 at 2 and 7:30 and Aug. 23 at 2. Tickets at the door on the days of the performances.)

Catskills on Broadway—A festival of ethnicity and all but unbroken laughter. Freddie Roman and Mal Z. Lawrence are the Jewish comedians; Dick Capri handles the Italians; and Louise DuArt does impressions. The jokes explode around us, and there isn't a dud in the lot. (12/23/91) (Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

The Comedy of Errors—Shakespeare in the Park continues with this production, which was staged by Cacá Rosset. (Delacorte, Central Park near W. 81st St. Closes Aug. 30. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 861-7277.)

Conversations with My Father—If you're looking for a totally satisfying theatrical experience, try the new Herb Gardner, a bittersweet memory play about a Lower East Side barkeep, his two sons, and the patrons of his tavern. As staged by Daniel Sullivan, with an ace cast led by the wonderful Judd Hirsch, the play does what "Jake's Women" and "Dancing at Lughnasa" would probably do if their authors were, respectively, more sophisticated and less sentimental. Grab this one. (4/13/92) (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Crazy for You—Loosely based on "Girl Crazy," which opened in 1930, this glorious show is actually a celebration of the music of George Gershwin and the lyrics of his brother Ira—nineteen songs in all—and also of the witty, imaginative choreography of Susan Stroman. Ken Ludwig wrote the lively book. Harry Groener and Jodi Benson are the lead actor/dancers. The scenery is by Robin Wagner; the costumes are by William Ivey Long; and the masterly direction is by Mike Ockrent. Bless 'em all. (3/2/92) (Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Falsettos—This back-to-back revival of "March of the Falsettos" and "Falsettoland," two of William Finn's three one-act musicals about a childish, self-absorbed man who leaves his wife and son for his not very nice male lover, is strictly for those who care. We've never understood the appeal of Mr. Finn's trilogy. It has a chronology as complicated as the Oedipus cycle and a dramatic sensibility akin to that of the Oresteia. To us, though, it has always seemed like banality set to music: shallow, unlikable people expressing themselves in shallow, unlikable songs. (5/11/92) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Five Guys Named Moe—The guys are black dancers and singers of ability and spirit, who perform the songs (either lyrics or music or both) of the late Louis Jordan, among them "Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying," "Ain't Nobody Here but Us Chickens," and "Is You Is or Is You Ain't My Baby?" This London import makes a merry evening. (4/20/92) (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

Guys and Dolls—A lively production of Frank Loesser's perfect musical, under the direction of Jerry Zaks. Nathan Lane and Faith Prince are the leading guy and doll, and Tony Walton designed the stunning scenery. (4/27/92) (Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Jake's Women—Alan Alda is at his genial best in the new Neil Simon. The play, about an aging writer trying to come to terms with the women in his life, past and present, is pretty much what you'd expect: some funny lines and a lot of phony dialogue. It's predictable, banal, and contrived, but at least it showcases a fine cast of actresses that includes Kate Burton and Joyce Van Patten. (4/6/92) (Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 307-4100.)

Jelly's Last Jam—The music of Jelly Roll Morton, self-proclaimed inventor of jazz, and, at the same time, an unsparing delineation of Morton himself. The show, an original if ever there was one, was written and directed by George C. Wolfe. In the starring role, Gregory Hines combines his astonishing talents as tap dancer and actor; Savion Glover, who plays the character as a young man, is worthy of him, which is saying a lot. Also present are Keith David, Tonya Pinkins, Wayne Mathis, and Mary Bond Davis. Luther Henderson has adapted Morton's music and offered some music of his own; the lyrics were written by Susan Birkenhead; and Hope Clark was the choreographer. (5/11/92) (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

Lotto (Experience the Dream)—A comedy by Cliff Roquemore. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 505-9251.)

Marvin's Room—A play about dying, suffering, and sacrifice in one family, written in a style so frisky as to set the teeth permanently on edge. There is a fine performance by Mark Rosenthal as a smoldering adolescent. Also with Alice Drummond, Laura Esterman, and Tim Monsion. Scott McPherson is the dramatist. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane, east of Sixth Ave., between W. 3rd and Bleecker Sts. 420-8000. Closes Sept. 6.)

The Most Happy Fella—This is one musical we think the world could be without and feel no sorrow. The story of a girl forced to content herself with some old duffer because some other old duffer wanted to teach everyone a lesson about making do with what life has to offer, it's pseudo opera superimposed on pseudo Americana. As for Gerald Gutierrez's Goodspeed Opera production, it's your basic slightly-better-than-average dinner-theatre revival. What's the rumpus? (2/24/92) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200. Closes Aug. 30.)

The Night Larry Kramer Kissed Me—A play written and performed by David Drake. (Perry Street Theatre, 31 Perry St. 564-8038.)

The Real Inspector Hound and **The Fifteen Minute Hamlet**—The Roundabout presents a double bill of comedies by Tom Stoppard. Simon Jones and David Healy star in both. (Criterion Center, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Ruthless!—This camp musical about a monster child star is harmless and amusing enough—assuming you can stomach the little

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girl. She gave us the pip. (Players, 115 Macdougal St. 254-5076.)

Sight Unseen—Donald Margulies' engrossing new play, which is about an Eric Fischl-type painter who decides to look up an old girlfriend he once treated badly, takes the contemporary art scene to task. Technically, it also plays around with time a good deal, though never sloppily or gratuitously. You end up being affected by a curious kind of resonance—it's earned, not something you've brought with you into the theatre. (2/3/92) (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 477-2477. Closes Sept. 6.)

The Tempest—The group called A Matinée Idyll presents free performances of Shakespeare's play in three outdoor locations. (Thursdays and Sundays at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument, Riverside Park at W. 89th St; Fridays at Belvedere Castle, Central Park; and Saturdays in Carl Schurz Park, East End Ave. and 86th St. Performances start at 6.)

Two Trains Running—August Wilson's latest, set in a Pittsburgh luncheonette in 1969, is one of those plays in which all the performances seem to be groping hotly after award nominations and everything is freighted with Meaning. (4/27/92) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200. Closes Aug. 30.)

LONG RUNS

BEAU JEST: A comedy by James Sherman. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.). . . **CATS:** Some twenty poems about cats by T. S. Eliot, set to music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. A mighty spectacle about mighty little, owing its effectiveness to Trevor Nunn's direction and to John Napier's sets and costumes. (Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200.). . . **DANCING AT LUGHNASA:** How you respond to Brian Friel's wistful autobiographical play depends a good deal on your personality and preoccupations. Either you will find it lovely and lyrical or it will strike you as the memory play from Hell. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.). . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** The longest-running long run recently celebrated its thirty-second birthday. (Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838.). . . **FOREVER PLAID:** Stuart Ross's loving tongue-in-cheek salute to the "guy groups" of the fifties is a real treat. Bring your mom. Hell, bring the whole family. (Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400.). . . **LOST IN YONKERS:** This family melodrama by Neil Simon, set in Yonkers during the Second World War, is about what happens when a cowering, pathetic man has to leave his two adolescent sons with his intimidating mother for the better part of a year. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211.). . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** The stars of this musical adaptation of the Victor Hugo novel are John Napier's settings and David Hersey's lighting. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200.). . . **MISS SAIGON:** Oh, the horror! The horror! (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200.). . . **NUNSENSE:** A musical comedy by Dan Goggin. (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.). . . **PERFECT CRIME:** A murder mystery by Warren Manzi. (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 695-3401.). . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** This much ballyhooed Andrew Lloyd Webber musical is fun—if you're not bothered by theatre that cares not a whit for words and contains not one ghost of an idea. Except for the sets, everything about the show is negligible. (Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200.). . . **THE SECRET GARDEN:** This lovely musical adaptation of the classic children's story by Frances Hodgson Burnett isn't just a kiddie show. Subtle, charming, intelligent, and wholly literary in its approach to adaptation, it manages both to be faithful to the spirit of the book and to comment on the particular moment in time that produced it. (St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.). . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** The never-ending nuptials of Anthony Angelo Nunzio and Valentina Lynne Vitale. With audience participation, as you probably know. (St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200.). . . **TUBES:** A performance work by Blue Man Group about art and other matters. (Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370.). . . **THE WILL ROGERS FOLLIES:** The sets by Tony Walton, the direction and choreography by Tommy Tune, the costumes by Willa Kim, and the row upon row of Ziegfeld girls make a feast for the eyes, but the funny bone and heart are neglected. With Mac Davis. (Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.)

DANCE

GIVEN the depredations that the Khmer Rouge visited on Cambodian culture, it is reasonable to suppose that by now the classical dance of Cambodia would be stone dead. Nevertheless, it continues to be practiced on a high level, both in Cambodia and in exile. We know this from performances by the Classical Dance Company of Cambodia during their United States tour two years ago and from a recent performance at Jacob's Pillow by a group composed, for the most part, of Cambodian émigrés trained in Phnom Penh before Pol Pot came to power. Of the two, in fact, it was the performance at the Pillow that offered the better dancing—sharper, more playful, more alive to the moment. Then again, the Pillow dancers were not beset by death threats, as was the company touring two years ago, or by a worry that their every muscular reaction would be interpreted by audiences and the press as *the* Cambodian Dance. This performance was a sidelight to an ongoing project being sponsored by the Pillow: to bring together Cambodian dance masters and Cambodian-American students several times a year, for a week or two at a time, in order to pass along the dance heritage.

Chan Moly Sam was one of those masters. She had come to the Pillow with her small son and her husband, the musician and ethnomusicologist Sam-Ang Sam, from their home in Seattle, where Ms. Sam teaches dance and Mr. Sam teaches and composes. During a rehearsal break, Ms. Sam, who trained as a dancer at the University of Fine Arts in Phnom Penh, explained that the gestures and movements of classical Cambodian dance are derived from the sculptures at Angkor, and that the goal of the dancing is a spiritual communication from the dancer to the audience. She emphasized that the spectacular aspects of the dance style—such as the uncommon flexibility of the dancers' fingers or the taffylike quality of their demi-pliés—are by-products of the performers' perfected concentration rather than technical achievements pursued for their own sake. At least, that's the way dancing was taught in the old days. "Here, for the children in America, we are using the scientific method to teach," she said. "We tell them 'bend your finger' first. Then we go into the spiritual."

IN TOWN

Feld Ballets/NY—Aug. 18-19 and Aug. 26 at 8: "Ion," "Evoe," "Frets and Women," and "Wolfgang Strategies.". . . ¶ Aug. 20-22 and Aug. 24 at 8: "Aurora I," "Danzon Cubano," "Hadji," and "Contra Pose.". . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 2:30 and Aug. 25 at 8: "To the Naked Eye," "Kore," "Frets and Women," and "Common Ground." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Through Aug. 29.)

OUT OF TOWN

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival—Garth Fagan Dance, Aug. 18-20 at 8, Aug. 21 at 8:30, and Aug. 22 at 2 and 8:30. In "Griot New York.". . . ¶ Laurie Carlos in a performance piece, Aug. 21 at 8, Aug. 22 at 5, and Aug. 23 at 7. (Becket, Mass. 1-413 243-0745.)

NIGHT LIFE

BY now, it's well known that Lyle Lovett is the strangest-looking guy in show business. He has a long, angular special effect of a face. And, even though he's shorn a few stories off his towering coiffure, he's still what he himself calls "a one-man hair band." Lovett's visibility is partly due to a small role in Robert Altman's movie "The Player"—he played a creepy detective who was always skulking around in the distance—but it's mostly due to his sly, genre-bending country records, the latest of which is "Joshua Judges Ruth." As a lyricist, Lovett's main concern is that thing called love, be it good, bad, drunken, or homicidal. His take on women, which is sardonic, to say the least, met with some hostility early on, but the singer shrugged the controversy off. In 1989, he even teased his detractors with a straight-faced recording of Tammy Wynette's "Stand By Your Man." And, in time, people came to see him for what he is: a good songwriter with something of an evil streak.

"Joshua Judges Ruth"—the title comes from three consecutive books of the Bible, but it's also a reference to the aforementioned fuss—is as good as Lovett's other records, and not a whole lot different. When he was recording the album, the singer described it for a reporter by saying, "It's just more songs by me. I'm sorry." At the time, that remark seemed like one more quotable quip, but actually it's a pretty fair review of the record. On "Joshua Judges Ruth," Lovett juxtaposes straightforward country songs with gospel and big-band blues. Still, a Lyle Lovett song is a Lyle Lovett song, and everything else—the horns and the hallelujahs—is just window dressing. The singer's consistency has been a mixed blessing. There's no doubt that everyone should own a Lyle Lovett record, but whether or not anybody needs to own more than one is another question.

Onstage, Lovett is truly, effortlessly funny. (Altman tapped him for "The Player" after his granddaughter took him to a Lovett concert.) Earlier this year, the singer played for a week at the Bottom Line, an engagement that drew everybody from Susan Sarandon to Rosanne Cash to John F. Kennedy, Jr., to Helen Gurley Brown. On August 25, at noon, Lovett will perform a free concert at the Lone Star Roadhouse; he'll also open for Bonnie Raitt on August 26-27 at Jones Beach. These dates should give ordinary mortals a chance to glimpse him in all his big-haired glory.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out some of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change; it is therefore always advisable to call ahead.)

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A sleek, green-walled room with brass railings and mounted O'Keeffian animal skulls. Look closer and you'll find that the skulls are wearing earrings. After the show, be sure to check out the adjoining restaurant/tapas bar, which

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NIGHT LIFE–Cont'd

looks like the indoor food market of your dreams. **LYPSINKA,** who will be performing here for the next few weeks, is the creation of John Epperson, who's played the invincible glamour queen in a series of shows so highly regarded that his character recently found its way into the pages of *Esquire's* "Women We Love" issue. The current show is called "Lypsinka! Now It Can Be Lip-Synched!" It finds Lypsinka doing what she does best—lip-synching, of course—to Gloria Swanson, Natalie Wood, Patty Duke, and Judy Garland, among others. Shows Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine, and Fridays and Saturdays at nine and eleven-fifteen, and Sundays at seven. Closed Mondays.

BIRDLAND, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—Many musicians who visit this jazz house are honored by having their portraits done, "in concert," by the house artist. These impressionistic renderings round out a glossy décor that includes flying-saucer light fixtures, burgundy velvet drapes, and some neon wading birds. A few upcoming highlights: **NAT DIXON'S** quartet on Aug. 20; the **CHARLES MC PHERSON** quartet, in a program called "To Bird with Love!" Aug. 21-22; and the **LENORA HELM** trio on Aug. 23. Music from nine. Dining.

Betty Carter at the Blue Note

BLUE NOTE, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—This blue-on-blue club is the place to find big-league jazz artists; it's an institution and it knows it: how many other clubs sell their own belt buckles? The Argentinian tenor-sax player **GATO BARBIERI** will be here through Aug. 23; the **AYDIN ESEN** septet performs on Aug. 24; and **BETTY CARTER** begins a week of shows on Aug. 25. Ms. Carter is a terrific jazz and scat singer who breathes new life into standards. A typical Carter song contains a range of emotions, from heavy-lidded low notes to airy, vibratoless passages in the higher registers. As a performer, she's full of surprises and comic verve. Music from nine. Dining.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—This big, airy folk-and-rock club tends to be the site of a lot of music-industry bashes. If you have trouble getting tickets to the early show, it's usually because some record company has bought the place out. Guitarist **STEVE HACKETT** comes in on Aug. 18. Hackett has always been an inventive player—he's adept with both electric and acoustic guitars—though his work hasn't always had much in the way of emotional content. He came to prominence in the seventies with the original incarnation of Genesis. But while Peter Gabriel and Phil Collins went on to take over the English-speaking world, Hackett never really found a vehicle for himself. A few years back, he and former Yes guitarist Steve Howe played in an unfortunate outfit called GTR. It'll be interesting to see what Hackett is up to here. **PETER CASE** and **PAL SHAZAR** share a bill on Aug. 19; and **GARRISON KEILLOR** and the **HOPEFUL GOSPEL QUARTET** come in on Aug. 20. Shows at eight and eleven. Burgers, fries, and other things to make your heart beat faster.

BRADLEY'S, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—Next door, there's a bustling, garishly lit market. Within the narrow walls of this venerable piano-and-bass preserve, however, everything is easy on the eyes and ears. **JOHN HICKS, CHICO FREEMAN,** and **MIKE FORMANEK** are here through Aug. 22; the **KENNY DREW, JR.,** trio appears on Aug. 23; and pianist **KENNY BARRON** leads a trio as of Aug. 24. Music from ten. Dining.

CAFÉ SIN-É, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—A small, peach-walled storefront. Sin-é is usually given over to a young, earthy crowd that drinks Rolling Rock or café au lait and waits for some Irish musician or other to blow in and play a set. The café doesn't have a schedule per se, so it's often after the fact that one hears that some great Irish rocker has made a stop here. A frustrating state of affairs, perhaps, but one can have fun just hoping, waiting, and watching the door. Music generally begins at about eight-thirty.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—The city's most famed rock club—a dark, narrow cave with neon-beer-sign stalactites and ancestral graffiti—is part sacred burial ground and part historic landmark, but it hasn't succumbed to nostalgia: new and used bands of every stripe continue to pass through nightly. The Hoboken combo **YO LA TENGO** performs on Aug. 21. The group, which briefly surprised its friends and fooled its enemies with last year's folky, restrained "Fakebook," is back in the feedback-and-angst business with its strong recent release, "May I Sing with Me." Music from eight on Sundays and Mondays, from eight-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from nine-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays.

CLUB 53, Sixth Ave. at 53rd St. (261-5853)—A new cabaret in the New York Hilton. It's a pleasantly lulling spot, where you can sink into deep sofas and eat off of big plates. **PEGGY LEE** continues her run here. Shows Tuesdays through Thursdays at eight-forty-five, and Fridays and Saturdays at eight-forty-five and ten-forty-five.

CONDON'S, 117 E. 15th St. (254-0960)—In the shadow of the Zeckendorf Towers sits this stucco-walled grotto, whose intimate scale makes it a fine spot for jazz. The wonderfully campy, over-the-top singer **PHOEBE LÉGÈRE** will be here as of Aug. 18. Légère is a trained pianist, cellist, and accordionist, and she boasts a four-octave vocal range. Don't be intimidated, though. She's also appeared in "The Toxic Avenger II," and she can play piano with one leg hitched up behind her head. Shows Tuesdays through Sundays at nine-thirty and eleven-thirty.

DUPLEX, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—A two-floor entertainment center. The bright, clean, wedge-shaped downstairs bar has French windows giving on to the bustle of Seventh Avenue, but the clamor indoors is far greater. Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, and the waitresses sing/shout pop standards with risqué lyrics and fire off wisecracks across the room; patrons are encouraged to take the mike, too. Upstairs there's a quieter bar and a cabaret, where you'll find a variety of performers nightly.

EIGHTY-EIGHT'S, 228 W. 10th St. (924-0088)—On Aug. 21, **PHILLIP OFFICER** will be in this Village cabaret, performing a set devoted to Yip Harburg, a lyricist who collaborated with the likes of Harold Arlen and Vernon Duke. The show, called "Fancy Meeting You," will include such Harburg standards as "Over the Rainbow," "It's Only a Paper Moon," and the Depression classic "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime." He'll get underway at eight-thirty.

FAT TUESDAY'S, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7902)—Through the iffy-looking side door, down the famous fun-house tunnel that's lined with mirrors and corrugated tin, and down a short flight of stairs, you'll find this softly lit, low-ceilinged, roughly Manhattan-shaped jazz preserve. **HELEN MERRILL** is in action Aug. 18-24. Ms. Merrill, a jazz star in the fifties, dropped out of sight for a few decades, resurfacing several years back. She's a singer with great control: she can make her cool, smoky, vibratoless voice do whatever she wants it to do. She can swing out when she feels like it, but ballads are her strong suit, and she seems to know it, to judge from her set lists. In this reflective mode, her singing has a quality of airy solitude that brings to mind Miles Davis and Chet Baker. A quintet led by saxophonist **SCOTT HAMILTON** begins work on Aug. 25. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor **LES PAUL,** the Thomas Edison of reverb, leads a trio. Music from eight. Dining.

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—A busy bar-and-grill in the piano-bass district. The musicians set up in the dining room, a clubby-looking space with leather banquettes and well-preserved collectibles: Sunday *Herald Tribune* covers, First World War posters, Hirschfeld cartoons. Up front, at the bar, you can keep your eye on the musicians, the conversationalists, and sidewalk life. Pianist **RONNY WHYTE** and bassist **LINC MILLMAN** will be on the premises Aug. 19-22. Music from about nine-thirty.

KNITTING FACTORY, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—The club most likely to feature an electric-rake player. Run by a couple of forward-looking Wisconsinites, the Knitting Factory takes in all manner of neo-this and post-that. The atmosphere is low-key bohemian—it's like a frat house for the avant-garde. The veteran jazz-funk outfit **DEFUNKT** is here Aug. 20-23. Music after nine.

LONE STAR ROADHOUSE, 240 W. 52nd St. (245-2950)—Spiffed-up theatre patrons walk by this club's façade—a Silver Eagle bus, with tires you can kick—and scratch their heads. Inside, big bearded guys with cowboy hats rub elbows at the bar while newcomers study the Texas memorabilia and, upstairs, the display of vintage Gibson guitars. The dining room, where bands hold sway, features a Wright Brothers-era airplane suspended from the ceiling, a dance floor where you can kick up some dust, and a balcony for quiet types. Apart from the club's usual lineup of evening shows, you might drop by on Aug. 25 at noon to hear **LYLE LOVETT.** Music after nine. Dining.

LUDLOW STREET CAFÉ, 165 Ludlow St. (353-0536)—A modest below-stairs room that looks like a slightly spruced-up tenement-building apartment. There's cheap food, a Greater East Village crowd, and, every Monday night, **BEAT RODEO,** a straight-shooting bar band that plays a mix of country, blues, Dylan, Byrds, the Velvets, and various found pop numbers. Sets from about eleven.

MARQUEE, 547 W. 21st St. (929-3257)—A rock club, just off the West Side Highway, that is one of the city's main venues for college-radio fare. The heavily touted alternative band **HELMET,** which comes in on Aug. 21, plays propulsive rock that's short on clichés and long on strange musical references. **TOAD THE WET SPROCKET** (a deceptively frivolous name lifted from a Monty Python skit) deserves a place at the forefront of the international brigade of young guitar-based rockers fighting to emerge from the shadow of R.E.M., U2, and the Smiths. Their powerful album, "Fear," could have been recorded in Athens or Manchester or Glasgow, or even in Seattle, but, as it turns out, Toad is a quartet of fresh-faced young fellows from Santa Barbara. Go figure. The band will be here on Aug. 25. Performing on the same bill will be the **GIN BLOSSOMS.**

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—The bands that play here today will be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. **DRIVE LIKE JEHU** comes in on Aug. 18. Shows are usually at ten on Thursdays, at eleven on Fridays and Saturdays, and at nine other nights.

MICHAEL'S PUB, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—There's more to Michael's Pub than Woody Allen, whose Monday-night Dixieland binges have given the place a little star cachet. Non-filmmakers can usually be found onstage here the rest of the week, in a main dining room that strives for the appearance of a British pub but looks more like a good old American family restaurant. Still, there's a real nice red telephone booth when you walk in the door. Singer-and-pianist Jo Thompson, whose career got an early boost from

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Walter Winchell, but who has not performed in this town in more than thirty years, begins an engagement here this week. Shows Tuesdays through Saturdays at nine-fifteen and eleven-fifteen.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—A moondust-in-your-hair cabaret where a club soda costs, well, a *lot*. There are plenty of niceties if you're so inclined: an ear-popping express elevator in which you can mingle with the famous; tables scattered with plastic diamonds and sapphires; and rest-room attendants who hover near the sink asking "Is the water too warm?" The club's appealing, expertly produced Irving Berlin revue, "Say It with Music," whose cast includes **Kaye Ballard,** will be running through the end of September. Shows from nine. Dining. Closed Mondays.

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—It may look like a plain old steak house, and the photos on the walls may look like Sardi's leftovers, but in the back room you'll find swing bands, Dixieland combos, and couples sprung from the legacy of Fred and Ginger. Mondays belong to the Smith Street Jazz Society, Tuesdays and Fridays to **Vince Giordano and the Nighthawks,** Thursdays to Stan Rubin's big band, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and His Stompers. Show times vary.

Ritz, 254 W. 54th St. (541-8900)—This space was once a theatre, as the cherubim friezes and Louis the Something ceiling attest. Then it was Studio 54, and, if you try real hard, you can still hear the grunts, moans, and snorts of seventies disco ghosts. Now it's a massive rock club, where the orchestra has been gutted for maximum standing capacity, where you have to wear a hospital-style wristband if you want to drink, and where, if you're bored with the band, you can watch the goons guarding the stage pass along rowdies like buckets of water at a fire. **Shabba Ranks** performs on Aug. 22. **Jimmy Cliff, Burning Spear,** Majek Fashek, and Zulu Spear share a bill on Aug. 25. Show times vary.

Song of Singapore Theatre, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St.—This is the new home of the Swing Dance Society, a group of Lindy Hop enthusiasts who've been putting on Sunday-night dance parties for several years now (the Cat Club was their former home base). Swing music at a mock forties Singapore night club—the musical "Song of Singapore" was put on here—may sound like an odd juxtaposition, but who cares? Strike up the band. The Big Swing performs on Aug. 23. Sets begin at eight. For information on the Society, call 696-9737.

Sounds of Brazil, 204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (243-4940)—The closest thing in Manhattan to a rain forest, this venerable club has many selling points: tropical drinks, Brazilian food, faux palm trees, a thatch-roofed bar. The live music is primarily from Africa, Brazil, and the Caribbean, and the dance floor is usually hopping. Music from nine-thirty Tuesdays through Thursdays, and from ten-thirty Fridays and Saturdays. Dining. Closed Sundays.

Space at Chase, 98 Third Ave., at 12th St. (475-1407)—One of those East Village joints where, for a few bucks, you can hear a handful of local rock bands. As is usually the case at these establishments, some of the bands will make you want to cower under the pinball machine while others will make you want to dance and shout and start your own independent label. As for décor, there's a bar, some chairs, some tables, some walls, a ceiling, and two dart boards. Music from nine-thirty, except on Tuesdays, when it starts at seven.

Supper Club, 240 W. 47th St. (921-1940)—Upstairs at this gilt-railinged, lamé-curtained club is a plush little nook called the Blue Room, which boasts celestial-motif wallpaper and a profusion of deep-sea blue. The racket of midtown can't find you here. **Ann Hampton Callaway** sings Tuesdays through Thursdays at nine, and **Charles de Forest** is here Tuesdays through Saturdays from ten.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—If you arrive late for a show at this celebrated shrine of jazz, you run the risk of being seated in the glass-enclosed terrace, which means you'll need a periscope to see the show. Otherwise, Sweet Basil is just the right environment for patrons—chiefly because it has a silence-or-else policy during shows. The **Nat Adderley** quintet is here through Aug. 23, and the **Nick Brignola** quartet starts work on Aug. 25. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter **Miles Evans** is in action on Mondays. Tee-off time is ten. Dining.

Tramps, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—Thanks to muralled pillars, ironwork, and a beautifully restored old tin ceiling, this loft space manages to feel homey. The sound system can be overwhelming, but the place is big enough to accommodate both those who want to lose their hearing and those who don't. Zydeco, soul, blues, and rock are the main order of business here. Aug. 21: **Carlene Carter.** Aug. 22: **Swamp Dogg.** Sets at eight and eleven weeknights, eight-thirty and eleven-thirty on Fridays and Saturdays. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—This windowless, slice-of-pie-shaped basement has an illustrious history that embraces everyone from Judy Holliday to Lenny Bruce, from Pete Seeger and Leadbelly to Miles Davis and Sonny Rollins. **Clark Terry's** quintet is in swing Aug. 18-23; **Arthur Taylor's Wailers** take hold on Aug. 25. Mondays are reserved for the **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra.** Music after nine-thirty.

Zinno, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—A rarity among jazz clubs: somewhere you'd go to eat even if there were no music. The food is Italian, the atmosphere is pastels and soft lights, and the musicians, who set up in a room between the bar and the dining room, are first-rate. **Gene Bertoncini** and **Michael Moore** work out through Aug. 22. Trumpeter **Cecil Bridgewater** joins pianist **Roland Hanna** and bassist **Tyrone Brown** for a week starting on Aug. 24. Music from eight every night but Sundays, when sets begin at seven-thirty.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

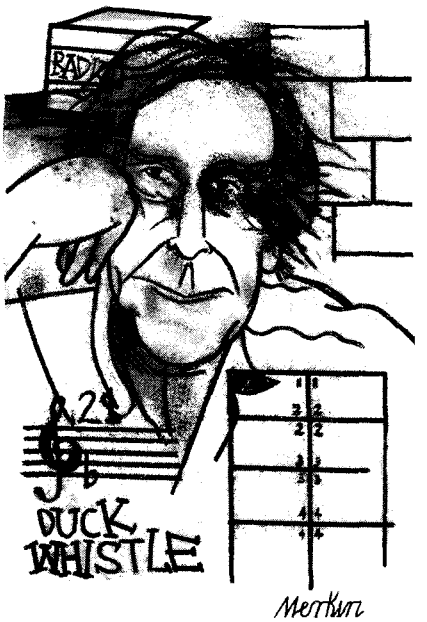
Penny Arcade—In a reprise of "Bitch! Dyke! Faghag! Whore!," a performance piece that employs video and erotic dancing. (P. S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288. Aug. 20-23 at 9.)

Ken Bullock—In "My Life Is a Show." (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, near Houston St. 219-3088. Aug. 18-21 at 9.)

ART

George Segal's monument to gay pride is finally in place in the little park on Sheridan Square, near the old Stonewall, the site of the 1969 police raid that effectively unleashed the modern gay-rights movement. The installation of Segal's white plaster group—a pair of women sitting on a bench, male counterparts standing nearby—was opposed for a long time, and some of the strongest objections were on aesthetic grounds. Segal's work is an intense amalgam of populist sentiment and prosaic literalism. But unlike the traditionalist sculptor J. Seward Johnson, for instance, whose bronze monument to the businessman-in-a-hurry may be seen, hailing a cab in perpetuity, in front of the Chemical Bank headquarters, on Park Avenue, Segal never works in the materials of power. His continued faith in the homely values of plain plaster is perhaps the only thing that keeps his work on the edge. In fact, Segal may have gained new relevance in the past few years through related efforts by younger figurative artists, such as Kiki Smith. Life-size, cast from actual bodies, and palpably handmade, Segal's pieces have an immediate and intimate quality that, like anything all too human, can be repellent. His statues are like real folks, warts and all, minus the DNA and—significantly, to many—the color.

Another recent Segal monument, "The Holocaust," is currently on loan (through October 18) at the Portland Museum of Art, in Maine, while the Jewish Museum in New York, its permanent home, is undergoing renovation. This assemblage of plaster figures piled loosely on a black wooden floor, with an isolated figure of an old man standing behind an actual barbed-wire fence, is clearly based on archival photographs of emaciated concentration-camp prisoners. Such deadpan, actuarial photographs derive a lot of their power from a complex emotional distance, in which instincts of self-preservation and empathy collide. Segal, in his solemn yet anti-monumental style, rejects distance in favor of righteousness. "The Holocaust," in its low-ceilinged room with morguelike air-conditioning, seems a dreadful, emotionally vulgar piece. The sculpture on Sheridan Square, by contrast, has settled easily into everyday life. People sit next to it, cruise through it, ignore it. It works, finally, because it is upstaged by the life around it. With Segal, context is all.



The music of John Cage at the Museum of Modern Art

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Al-Andalus: The Art of Islamic Spain" includes more than a hundred works of art, from a wood ceiling to a mosaic dado to an ivory coffin. Through Sept. 27. . . . ¶ The recent donation of the Perls collection—a hundred and sixty-three objects from the kingdom of Benin—has substantially redefined the museum's African holdings. This exhibition of the collection is a welcome relief from the rigid theatre of many of the museum's blockbusters: it enables viewers to make their own discoveries. Through Sept. 13. . . . ¶ "Modern Design: 1890-1990" shows off the museum's holdings in twentieth-century furniture, architectural and design drawings, glass, ceramics, and other objects. Through Oct. 25. . . . **Note:** The museum's roof garden, planted with eight sculptures by Rodin, is open when the weather permits. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—"The Young Rebel in American Photography, 1950-1970" presents work by, among others, Diane Arbus, Larry Clark, Bruce Davidson, Robert Frank, and Lee Friedlander. Through Oct. 13. . . . ¶ In an effort that is not without its ironies, Erika Rothenberg has lately been

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PONTICULUS

When the students of Stuyvesant High School return this fall to the joys of quadratic equations and subordinate clauses, they'll at least have the consolation of being able to get to class with ease—via the Tribeca Bridge, which will feed them directly into their new campus, at the edge of the Hudson, at Chambers and West Streets. Erected by the Battery Park City Authority, in conjunction with the Board of Education and the Stuyvesant Coalition, the two-hundred-and-fifty-foot-long white truss bridge will permit the students to safely bypass the automotive bustle of West Street, more than two dozen feet below them. The rest of the world can also use the bridge, to get to the Hudson River Park, which is adjacent to the school grounds.

The bridge was welded together in Delaware, without the benefit of bolts or rivets, and hoisted into place on this past leap day. It's not quite finished—a lot of tempered glass, as well as exterior elevators for the handicapped, has yet to be installed—but it clearly presents a determined counterpoint to the bridge at the World Financial Center, just down the street. More than anything else, that tube resembles an impersonal, all-business subway car. In contrast, the new arrival, full of rakish zigzag bracing, looks more user-friendly.

And that's no accident. Before the bridge could be built, it had to win the approval of the city's Art Commission, which usually takes a pretty dim view of anything that will obstruct New York's streetscapes. "If a bridge is an absolute necessity," said Edward Ames, president of the commission, "it should be as light as possible, with materials that fade into the sky rather than make a statement."

struggling to find a resonant way of combining her illustrational style with a political agenda favored by the small, already converted art world she has chosen to address. A recent gallery show gave evidence of a breakthrough of sorts; her series of sardonic "greeting cards," which took on such subjects as racism, child abuse, and political exploitation, was chillingly unfunny. Now she has carried this tack even further, by transforming the museum's "Projects" space into a card shop à la Hallmark; unfortunately, all this display accomplishes is to show how easily surfeit can destroy a good idea. Rothenberg treats the space as if it were an extension of the museum's gift shop, and this may explain why her show always seems to be crowded. But once she captures her audience, she seems incapable of doing anything with it—the work elicits neither laughter nor outrage. Through Aug. 25. . . . ¶ A small, pleasant exhibition of the Finnish designer Kaj Franck's gloriously spare designs. Particularly impressive is his Kilta tableware, which was in production from 1953 to 1975 and still looks contemporary. Its finely tuned colors, in such contrasting shades as deep aqua green and chartreuse, seem like refined versions of our own Fiestaware. Through Oct. 12. . . . **NOTE:** The museum's sculpture garden, at 14 W. 54th St., is open, free, on Fridays and Saturdays from 6 to 10, with musicians from the Juilliard School performing at 7:30. This summer's program is dedicated to the music of the late John Cage (for information about specific programs, see the Music listings). Through Aug. 29. (The museum is open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—Dan Flavin's huge pink neon Maypole, with its surrounding neon rigging—an enlarged version of a 1971 piece—is for the moment the lone occupant of Frank Lloyd Wright's restored Fifth Avenue snail. The Flavin has clout, especially at night, when it conjures the honky-tonk Art Deco motifs of South Miami Beach. Meanwhile, the permanent collection, in the new annex, looks, on the whole, forlorn: crowded, badly lit, and compressed by having a museum shop at both the top and the bottom of the mini-rotunda. Through Aug. 27. (Open daily, except Thursdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway—The new branch, in a loft building whose floors have been transformed by Arata Isozaki, is sleek, with large paintings by Andy Warhol, Antoni Tàpies, Joan Mitchell, and Roy Lichtenstein decorating the reception area. But the inaugural show, grandiosely titled "From Brancusi to Bourgeois," is shameless. It includes, on the ground floor, a group of work by Joseph Beuys and Louise Bourgeois. While her enclosures and display cases are sensationally potent, his installations look as if they had been plunked down in an automobile showroom. On the vast bisected floor upstairs, the situation is even worse. On one side, white-on-white paintings by Robert Ryman seem to have been hung as backdrops to a group of Brancusi sculptures, while, on the other side, several floor pieces by Carl Andre undermine an assortment of extraordinary paintings and drawings by Kandinsky, who, as ever, is at once this museum's bulwark and its sacrificial lamb. Through Aug. 27. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings until 10.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—"Homecoming: William H. Johnson and Afro-America, 1938-46" includes eighty paintings made after Johnson returned to the United States from Europe and developed his simplified brilliant-color style. Through Oct. 25. . . . ¶ An auxiliary exhibition, "Parallel Visions," draws on the museum's permanent collection to provide a context for viewing the works of Johnson. Among the artists represented here are Philip Evergood, Edward Hopper, Jacob Lawrence, Ben Shahn, and Alice Trumbull Mason. Through Oct. 25. (Another complementary show, a survey of Johnson's career, can be seen at the Studio Museum in Harlem, through Sept. 20.). . . ¶ "The Paintings of George Bellows." Bellows began as a typical Ashcan-school painter—a maker of gritty, exuberantly rendered New York scenes, such as nude bathing boys jumping into the Hudson. He also made good portraits of tough-eyed working-class kids staring out from dark-brown fields. But he was at his best when he was orchestrating urban noise. Bellows could capture crowds like no other painter of the fast-growing urban scene. This skill, of course, was most visible in his paintings of boxers, which have become symbols of American genre painting of the early twentieth century, especially of the sort this museum champions. Bellows was also quite good in his small landscapes of Maine. They have luscious brushwork, with occasional moments of shocking color—insistent greens and reds. But shortly after he hit his stride, in the teens, Bellows' work deteriorated dramatically, into flabby scenes of the Newport set and stiff portraits of ladies who appear to be suffering from premature rigor mortis. Yet in the midst of this aesthetic depression Bellows managed to paint some of the most haunting works of his career. The exhibition does not include the most famous of these, "Dempsey and Firpo," with its automatons trying to fight their way out of the smoky Caravaggesque composition. But it does include a portrait of the artist's mother, with an eerie manipulation of light, and a prison picture of Edith Cavell, a British nurse executed during the First World War. Through Aug. 30. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"Painters of a New Century: The Eight & American Art," an exhibition devoted to the work of the turn-of-the-century painters known as the Eight: Arthur B. Davies, William Glackens, Robert Henri, Ernest Lawson, George Luks, Maurice Prendergast, Everett Shinn, and John Sloan. Sept. 21. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—Since its founding, in 1897, by the three Hewitt sisters, whose goal was to elevate taste in America, the Cooper-Hewitt has accumulated a marvellous, albeit rarely displayed, library of the decorative arts. "A Design Resource" is a rotating sampler of nearly a thousand objects drawn from the museum's collection. "Animals in Design" and "Designs for Seating" are among the new sections. Through Aug. 30. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge from 5 to 9; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—"An Album of Interiors" consists of more than sixty nineteenth-century watercolors, from two private family collections—one American and one European. Through Aug. 23. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—"The Making of America" consists of twenty-nine letters and official documents by such figures as Julia Ward Howe, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Benjamin Franklin. Through Aug. 30. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Museum of American Folk Art, Columbus Ave. at 65th St.—"The Art of Embellishment" features fifty painted and stencilled objects—doors, pieces of furniture, tinware, and textiles—from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American homes. Through Sept. 6. (Open daily, except Mondays, 11:30 to 7:30.)

Museum of the City of New York, Fifth Ave. at 104th St.—Two shows of New York images. "Empire City," an exhibition of all the paintings and drawings in the Robert R. Preato collection, features work by George Luks, Abraham Walkowitz, and Theresa Bernstein. "Recent Gifts: Works on Paper" is a display of woodcuts, lithographs, etchings, drawings, and watercolors from the thirties to the eighties. Among the etchings are a group of thirteen made between 1927 and 1930 by the Social Realist Philip Reisman (1904-92). Both shows through Aug. 30. . . . ¶ "Roots and Heritage in Latin American Art," a show of paintings, prints, and posters by Carlos Gonzales Ortiz, Maria Teresa Angulo, Elio Beltran, Bianca Huizard, Rosita Maldonado, and others. Through Aug. 30. (Open Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

National Academy of Design, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—A hundred and twenty-four prints, drawings, and watercolors by the German artist Lovis Corinth (1858-1925). Through Sept. 13. . . . ¶ "Masterworks of American Impressionism from the Pfeil Collection" features eighty-seven paintings, by such artists as Mary Cassatt, Childe Hassam, Lila Cabot Perry, and John Twachtman. Through Aug. 30. . . . ¶ "The Artist's Eye," the first in a series of exhibitions to be curated by artists who are academy members. Philip Pearlstein has done the selecting here; among the forty works on view are Ryder's "Marine" and Sargent's "Portrait of Monet." Through Sept. 27. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5; Friday evenings until 8, with no admission charge after 5.)

New-York Historical Society, 170 Central Park W., at 77th St.—"Ansel Adams: The Early Years" covers the period from 1919 to 1941 and includes, along with several of the famous Western landscapes, lesser-known still-lifes, portraits, and views of New York City. Through Oct. 11. . . . ¶ An exhibition, mostly of paintings, from the collection of the Century Association. Some of the works, such as Albert Bierstadt's "Guerrilla Warfare, Civil War" (1862) and Winslow Homer's "Nurse and Child" (1868), were accepted by the association in lieu of an initiation fee. Through Oct. 11. . . . ¶ Convention fever lives on in "Party Time: Presidential Campaigns Since 1832," a large gathering of glorious political artifacts. Through Sept. 20. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 to 5, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, 11 to 5.)

Queens Museum of Art, Flushing Meadow Park—"Colombia: Contemporary Images," an exhibition of paintings and sculptures by thirty-

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five native Colombians. Through Sept. 13. . . . ¶ Drawings and distorted silhouettes by Brazilian installation artist Regina Silveira. Through Sept. 13. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 5.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—A retrospective of the career of William H. Johnson, in conjuction with the "Homecoming" show at the Whitney Museum. Through Sept. 20. . . . ¶ An exhibition of a dozen large-scale paintings and a dozen works on paper by William T. Williams. Through Nov. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Mondays through Fridays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Paul Georges—As the New York art world settles into its traditional month of indolence, ten paintings of leonine vigor have somehow appeared uptown. Georges, who was born in 1923 and lives in New York and in Normandy, is known as a champion of the figure, and has often been called a neo-baroque painter because he thinks big and paints allegories. But this sort of talk makes him sound academic, when even a glance at his work produces a jolt of pure optical energy that rivals any to have come out of Action painting. For several years, Georges has been engrossed by Ovid's tale of Diana and Actaeon, which tells of the virgin goddess's anger at a young hunter who accidentally sees her bathing naked in the woods. Diana takes her vengeance by shooting the interloper with an arrow that turns him into a stag. On view is a bracingly fresh "Study for 'The Red Diane and Acteon' " (1987-88), as well as two recent narrative variations: the jazzy and near-monochromatic "(Blue) Diane at the Bath" and the kooky, lurid "She Turns Him Into a Stag," whose vengeful goddess suggests a hard-bitten cabaret singer. Among other paintings here are a cheerful, heroic "Aurora," in which the goddess is borne aloft by a dove and holds a crescent moon, and an Amazonian nude on horseback, titled "Hello Calvados," which has some of the unbridled oomph of a Rosa Bonheur. Through Aug. 28. (Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St.)

OTHER VENUES

"Art in the Anchorage"—Creative Time has mounted its ninth annual summer salon in the vaults of the Brooklyn Bridge. On view are six installations, by Helene Aylon, Gretchen Bender, Mildred Howard, Seiko Mikami, the Women's Action Coalition, and Liz Young; a continuous slide presentation of works by photographers Nina Kuo, Dona McAdams, Marilyn Nance, and Lynda Rodolitz; and a memorial exhibition of works by furniture designer and graphic artist Don Ruddy. Several readings, panel discussions, and performances are also scheduled at various times during the run of the show. Through Sept. 20. (Cadman Plaza West at Front St., Brooklyn. Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

"Cross Section"—Battery Park City has been transformed into one huge indoor-and-outdoor sculpture park for this show of seventy-five contemporary works, which are on loan from nineteen New York City museums. Among the sixty-five artists represented are Viola Frey, Nam June Paik, Alfredo Jaar, Louise Bourgeois, Christian Marclay, Isamu Noguchi, and Faith Ringgold. Through Sept. 20. (Battery Park City and World Financial Center. Exhibition guides are available at kiosks throughout the area.)

"Putt-Modernism"—An entertaining and provocative eighteen-hole miniature-golf course, in which each hole has been designed by a different contemporary artist. In Gregory Amenoff's piece, for example, the ball travels down a time line of Elvis's life to a cup labelled "Las Vegas: Hole of Fate." The golf balls are imprinted with "truisms" by Jenny Holzer ("Raise boys and girls the same way," "Absolute submission can be a form of freedom"). You can rent a putter for five bucks, and just looking is free. Through Sept. 27. (Artists Space, 223 West Broadway. The course is open Thursdays through Saturdays from noon until midnight and Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Sundays from noon until ten.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

Manhattan doesn't have piazzas, and it doesn't have malls, but it sure has skyscrapers, and with them some of the best lobbies around for people-watching. On occasion, you can even take in a show—such as the one on display (through September 25) in the Tower lobby of One Madison Avenue (at 24th Street) to commemorate the upcoming hundred-and-twenty-fifth anniversary of the building's tenant, Met Life. The modest exhibition there is a kind of history lesson about the early life of the building, including a couple of photographs of the surrounding area.

This rock of architecture, designed by N. LeBrun & Sons, seems never to have inspired the kind of pilgrimage that photographers have long made to its neighbors: the Flatiron Building (which has been memorialized by Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Steichen, Alvin Coburn, and many others) and the Chrysler Building. Thus most of the photographs in "Met Life: The Early Years, 1868-1910," organized by Linda Marchisotto, have a documentary rather than an artistic interest; there are also all sorts of ephemera—postcards, handbills, and classic Met Life booklets like "A Friend in Need Is a Friend Indeed"—taken from the building's archives. We learn that the Tower edifice was once the largest office building in the world, boasting more elevators and typewriters than any other. There are images of people working in rooms that have walls and walls of filing cases. And there are photos of the board room, the treasurer's room, and other V.I.P. offices that might make C.E.O.s of even the largest companies today feel like pipsqueaks.

"An Enduring Interest: The Photographs of Alexander Gardner"—Gardner's many portraits of Abraham Lincoln are endlessly fascinating character studies, and his Civil War photographs—which he published himself, along with the work of several colleagues, in "Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book of the War"—combine fact and emotion so persuasively that he has been called one of the inventors of photojournalism. He took casual as well as formal portraits of Union officers and enlisted men, he photographed Confederate prisoners and wounded soldiers, and he memorialized the dead on the battlefield, who are seen as weighted forms among the rocks and sticks, already part of the earth beneath them. Through Sept. 6. (International Center of Photography, 1130 Fifth Ave., at 94th St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesdays until 8.)

"Special Collections: The Photographic Order from Pop to Now"—Including Bernd and Hilla Becher, Annette Messager, Richard Prince, Ed Ruscha, Judy Fiskin, Andy Warhol, John Baldessari, and Dennis Adams. Through Oct. 16. (International Center of Photography Midtown, Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

"Recent Celebrity Photography"—Seventy color and black-and-white portraits by such artists as Brigitte Lacombe, Steven Meisel, Matthew Rolston, and Helmut Newton. Through Sept. 6. (American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. Open daily, except Mondays, noon to 4; Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 6.)

Short List—Linda Butler, Witkin, 415 West Broadway (closed Mondays, through Aug. 21); **Todd Webb**, Houk Friedman, 1094 Madison Ave., at 82nd St. (closed Mondays, through Aug. 28).

MUSIC

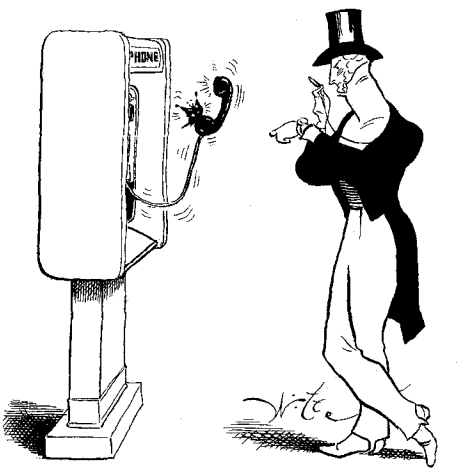
Both the violinist Pamela Frank and the pianist Peter Serkin are children of important musicians; both are serious, investigative artists. The program they are to play at the Tanglewood Festival on August 20 is one of rich, substantial, engaging works, most of them—perhaps all—masterpieces. But the one that really persuades us to make the trip is the Second Violin Sonata of Ferruccio Busoni.

Busoni, who lived from 1866 to 1924, was revered as a pianist and a teacher. As a composer, however, his time is still coming. His music, with its elusive, ruminative counterpoint between the Latin and Teutonic roots of his musician parents, is like some difficult but fascinating book you know you want to read, and which you've started now and then, but never have had time to finish. We can remember when the operas of Janáček felt like that, and we know older musicians who likewise remember the symphonies of Mahler as uncharted territory waiting to be explored. This violin-and-piano sonata has seemed to us inexpressibly rich in past performances, though we've never exactly learned it.

All sorts of Busoni pieces that only specialists know may become repertory works tomorrow: the elegaic and frivolous Concertino for Clarinet, evoking the composer's father (an itinerant virtuoso); the dense, rhapsodic Fantasia Contrappuntistica, which shows a composer lost in thought over the unfinished last fugue of Bach; the demoniac piano pieces and arrangements that were his own concert encores; the cosmically ambitious "Doktor Faust," due soon, in its New York première, from the New York City Opera. Gidon Kremer has recently recorded the sonata for Deutsche Grammophon (and there are old versions played by Joseph Szigeti that are worth hunting out). Thanks in advance to Ms. Frank and Mr. Serkin for opening the book a page further.

IN TOWN—OPERA

New York City Opera—Carmen, in a new production, with Sharon Graham, Patricia Racette, John Absalom, and Dean Peterson; conducted by Guido Ajmone-Marsan. (Aug. 18 at 8 and Aug. 22 at 1:30.). . . **Turandot**,



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MUSIC–Cont'd

with Catherine Kelly, Eva Zseller, Vincenzo Scuderi, and Harry Dworchak; Steven Sloane. (Aug. 19 at 8 and Aug. 23 at 1:30.)... RIGOLETTO, with Sheryl Woods, Martin Thompson, and Sigmund Cowan; Joseph Colaneri. (Aug. 21 and Aug. 26 at 8.)... LA BOHÈME, with Gwynne Geyer, Nina Warren, Robert Brubaker, and Eugene Perry; Mark Gibson. (Aug. 22 and Aug. 25 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 870-5570.)

MOZART OPERAS IN CONCERT—The conclusion of a festival of the composer's operas, mostly in concert format, with the New York Chamber Symphony. Quite surprising, when you think of it—two Mozart operas waiting more than two hundred years for their American premières, and both getting aired in the same week. Aug. 18: "Il Sogno di Scipione," in its U.S. première, with Renée Fleming, Pamela Coburn, and Robert Swensen; conducted by Claudio Scimone.... ¶ Aug. 21: "Der Schauspieldirektor" (known to English-speaking audiences as "The Impresario"), sung in German, but with the musical numbers connected by a text in English by Albert Innaurato (who also directs this semi-staging); with Ruth Welting and Erie Mills as the feuding sopranos. The evening also includes several concert arias, as well as two completed sections of "L'Oca del Cairo," an opera which the composer left unfinished. Tenor Philip Cokorinos helps out in the "non-Impresario" items, and Julius Rudel conducts throughout.... ¶ Aug. 22: "Ascanio in Alba," in its U.S. première, with Ibolya Verebics, Brian Asawa, Theodora Hanslowe, Claron McFadden, and David Kuebler; conducted by Adam Fischer. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. Evenings at 7:30.)... NOTE: The composer's "Lucio Silla," to be performed at Avery Fisher Hall on Aug. 17, is listed under the Mostly Mozart Festival.

IN TOWN—CONCERTS

MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL—Final concerts of this year's festival and, coincidentally, of the Mozart Bicentennial at Lincoln Center. Aug. 17 at 7:30: Mozart's early opera "Lucio Silla," with Harolyn Blackwell, Cecilia Bartoli, Vinson Cole, and J. Patrick Raftery; Gerard Schwarz conducts the New York Chamber Symphony and the Mostly Mozart Festival Chorus.... ¶ Aug. 18 at 8: The Kalichstein-Laredo-Robinson Trio, plus colleagues (as required), perform music by Mozart, Beethoven (his Clarinet Trio), Mendelssohn (his C-Minor Piano Trio), and Brahms (his Horn Trio).... NOTE: In a pre-concert recital, the ensemble will perform Mozart's Trio in B-Flat (K. 502).... ¶ Aug. 19-20 at 8: Mezzo-soprano Cecilia Bartoli will sing arias by Mozart and Rossini, and Yefim Bronfman will be featured in Mozart's D-Major Piano Concerto (K. 537), with Gerard Schwarz conducting the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra; instrumental works by Rossini and Mendelssohn (his "Italian" Symphony) round out the program.... NOTE: In pre-concert recitals both evenings, violinist Mitchell Stern and Mr. Bronfman will perform Mozart's Violin Sonata in B-Flat (K. 454).... ¶ Aug. 21-22 at 8: Gerard Schwarz conducts a program of works Mozart wrote at the very end of his life: the overture to "Die Zauberflöte," the Clarinet Concerto (with Richard Stoltzman), the motet "Ave Verum Corpus," and the Requiem; with soprano Pamela Coburn, mezzo-soprano Wendy Hoffman, tenor Vinson Cole, bass Paul Plishka, and the Mostly Mozart Festival Chorus. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Pre-concert recitals, which are open to ticketholders, begin at 7.)

BARGEMUSIC—Chamber music by Beethoven (his "Kreutzer" Sonata), Brahms (his First Clarinet Sonata), and Khachaturian, played by violinist Ik-Hwan Bae, clarinettist David Shifrin, and pianist Joseph Villa. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Aug. 20-21 at 7:30, and Aug. 23 at 4.)

POMERIUM MUSICES—The name of this ensemble of early-music chamber singers means something like "the outskirts of music," and, ever since he founded the group, in 1972, Alexander Blachly has presided over the precinct as conductor and resident musicologist. In this benefit concert, he will direct sacred a-cappella works by Tomás Luis de Victoria (including two out-of-season Christmas motets), Orlando di Lasso (a six-voiced Salve Regina, among other pieces), and Antoine Busnois (the quincentennial of whose death will be observed in November). (Church of St. Ignatius Loyola, Park Ave. at 84th St. Aug. 21 at 8. For information about tickets, call 316-3953.)... NOTE: Mr. Blachly will present a pre-concert lecture, beginning at 7:30.

JOHN CAGE'S "EUROPERA 5"—The penultimate weekend of this year's Summergarden at MOMA assumes a memorial cast following the death, on August 12, of John Cage. Juilliard students and recent graduates who have spent the summer exploring the late musical inventor's works will present one of his recent compositions, "Europera 5," in which familiar operatic excerpts mingle with chance elements to offer flashes of insight: a perfect example of how Mr. Cage changed the way we listen. (Sculpture Garden, Museum of Modern Art, 14 W. 54th St. Aug. 21-22 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

LINCOLN CENTER SPACES OUT—Since the nineteen-fifties, Henry Brant has been writing music that draws on spatial relationships as a rudiment of composition. His pieces are inherently evanescent: his "Fire in the Amstel" (1982), for example, was realized by a hundred flutists proceeding in boats through the canals of Amsterdam, with their pipings intersecting with the sounds of jazz drummers, church carillons, brass bands, and street organs; and if you missed "Northern Lights Over the Twin Cities" (1986), which involved seven vocal and instrumental groups (including a bagpipe band) distributed throughout a sports arena in Minnesota, you will probably not get a second chance anytime soon. You might console yourself, however, by attending the creation of Brant's "500: Hidden Hemisphere," a "spatial quadruple compendium" (as the composer puts it) reflecting on the history of the New World since Columbus' arrival. The score will be performed by four discrete ensembles, any one of which would be capable of creating quite a lot of sound unassisted: the U.S. Coast Guard Band (conducted by Lewis J. Buckley), the U.S. Military Academy Bands (led by Frank Dubey), the Wesleyan University Pandemonium Steel Band (its pandemonium somewhat controlled, we assume, by Neely Bruce), and the Goldman Memorial Band (under the baton of Mr. Brant himself). The hundred and sixty-five participating musicians (each playing a separate part) will encircle Lincoln Center's North Plaza, around the reflecting pool with the Henry Moore sculpture, and the audience will be encouraged to wander about to appreciate the proceedings from various perspectives. (Aug. 22-23 at 5:30. No tickets necessary. Wear walking shoes.)

BRONX ARTS ENSEMBLE—Fortepianist Kenneth Cooper and friends play Mozart's two Piano Quartets; soprano Josephine Mongiardo and clarinettist Paul Gallo join him to perform Schubert's "Der Hirt auf dem Felsen." (Rockwood Drive Circle, Van Cortlandt Park, the Bronx. Aug. 23 at 2.... ¶ McGinley Center, Fordham University, the Bronx. Aug. 23 at 4. No tickets necessary for either concert. For information, call 1-718 601-7399.)

OUT OF TOWN

TANGLEWOOD—Final classical concerts of the season. Aug. 20 at 8:30: Violinist Pamela Frank and pianist Peter Serkin perform sonatas by Bach, Brahms (his Third), and Busoni, in addition to Schoenberg's Fantasy (Op. 47).... ¶ Aug. 21 at 8:30: Marek Janowski conducts the Boston Symphony in Dvořák's "Othello" Overture, Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, and Bartók's Piano Concerto No. 3 (with Garrick Ohlsson).... NOTE: In a pre-concert recital, beginning at 6:30 and open to ticketholders, Mr. Ohlsson will play Beethoven's F-Major Piano Sonata (Op. 10, No. 2) and (with assisting artists) Dvořák's A-Major Piano Quintet.... ¶ Aug. 22 at 8:30: James Conlon leads the Boston Symphony in Arvo Pärt's Symphony No. 2, excerpts from Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet," and arias by Mozart (featuring soprano Carol Vaness).... ¶ Aug. 23 at 2:30: Marek Janowski conducts the Boston Symphony in Brahms' Violin Concerto (with Itzhak Perlman) and Symphony No. 4.... ¶ Aug. 23 at 8:30: John Nelson and others lead the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra in works by Berlioz, Debussy, and Ravel. (Lenox, Mass. For information about tickets, call 1-413 637-1940.)

BARD MUSIC FESTIVAL—The conclusion of a two-week exploration of Richard Strauss, his music, and his world, through concerts and lectures. Aug. 21 at 8: Soprano Juliana Gondek and pianist Donald St. Pierre perform songs by Strauss and Mahler.... NOTE: Barbara Petersen will present a pre-concert lecture at 7:15.... ¶ Aug. 22 at 1: The William Appling Singers perform a-cappella choral works by Strauss.... NOTE: Timothy Jackson will present a pre-concert lecture at 12:15.... ¶ Aug. 22 at 3:30: Chamber music by Brahms and Strauss, including C-Minor Piano Quartets by each, written ten years apart.... NOTE: Sarah Rothenberg will present a pre-concert lecture at 2:45.... ¶ Aug. 22 at 8: Leon Botstein conducts the Festival Orchestra in Strauss's D-Minor Violin Concerto and "Metamorphosen," as well as obscure works by Max von Schillings, Siegmund van Hausegger, Hans Pfitzner, and Alexander Ritter.... NOTE: Mr. Botstein will present a pre-concert lecture at 7.... ¶ Aug. 23 at 1: Piano and chamber compositions by Strauss, Reger, Busoni, Pfitzner, and Schoenberg.... NOTE: The concert will be preceded by a panel discussion at 11 A.M. and a lecture, by Robert Morgan, at 12:30.... ¶ Aug. 23 at 4: Leon Botstein leads the Festival Orchestra in an all-Strauss concert that includes the "Panathenäenzug for Piano Left Hand and Orchestra" (with Ian Hobson as soloist), and what is being purveyed as "The Last Orchestral Songs," consisting of the traditional "Four Last Songs" plus a fifth, "Ruhe, meine Seele," which the composer orchestrated in 1948, at about the same time he composed the others; Helen Donath will be the soprano soloist.... NOTE: Michael P. Steinberg and Timothy Jackson will join in delivering pre-concert comments at 3. (Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson. For information about tickets and specific locations, call 1-914 758-7559.)

JAZZ/POP/ROCK PERSONAL APPEARANCES

DAVID BYRNE—"Uh-Oh," Byrne's first full-blooded album since Talking Heads disappeared in the rearview mirror, has been out for half a year now, and it still holds up. The singer's unpopular Latin-Caribbean adventures have finally paid off: the brass and the salsa rhythms on "Uh-Oh" mix naturally with the edgy, high-strung guitar-and-keyboard elements of Byrne's rock-and-roll roots. Best of all, Byrne, sporting a sharp set of sideburns and a rockabilly pompadour, seems completely committed once again, and has been expending his considerable charisma in a series of incendiary one-man concerts that feature both new songs and Talking Heads numbers. This show will begin with a brief solo set echoing the recent tour, and then the volume will get cranked up with a nine-piece band, including four horns, backing up the guitar-slinging Mr. Byrne. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Aug. 19 at 8.)

NEIL DIAMOND—In 1966, at the age of twenty-five, this Brooklyn native "couldn't figure out how to write the hit songs of the day," as he confessed recently. He "didn't feel part of the flower generation." But when a new label, called Bang Records, gave him a shot at recording his songs, Diamond reinvented himself as a low-voiced, rasping troubadour, and came through with "Solitary Man," "Cherry, Cherry," and "Kentucky Woman." Before the decade was over, he had become part of the amazing and unrepeatable Top 40 sound of those years. ("Sweet Caroline," "Holly Holy," and "Cracklin' Rosie" will probably sound fresh forever.) But Neil Diamond definitely wasn't a flower child, and even after the great songs stopped appearing, his affinity for middle-of-the-road schmalz and late-Elvis-style showmanship kept his career rolling right on through the seventies and eighties. There can hardly be any surprises left in a Neil Diamond concert, but the man in the sequinned shirt can still give his nostalgic fans what they want without becoming a Vegas mannequin. This homecoming stand, which comes at the half-way point in a sold-out world tour, also coincides with the release of two fascinating career-retrospective boxed sets. It should be a grand, corny, rocking affair. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Aug. 20-21 at 8.)

HANK WILLIAMS, JR./PATTY LOVELESS—The country charts are full of exciting, hard-rocking, and hungry new contenders, but New York concertgoers are denied anything more than the occasional fleeting glimpse of the action. They'll find some here. Hank, Sr.,'s boy is a strong, grizzled elder statesman and a

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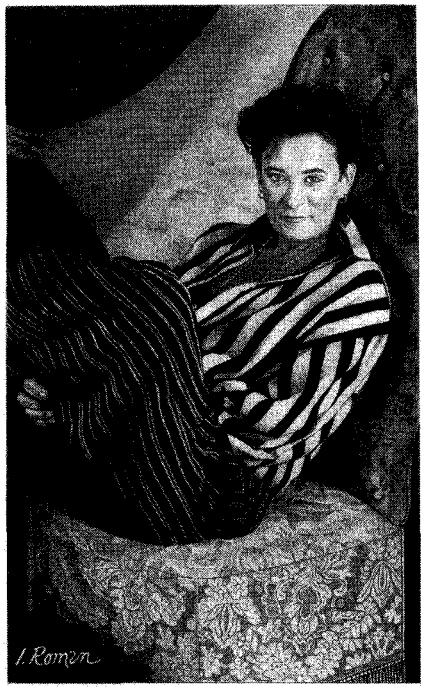

k. d. lang

good headliner, but twang scouts definitely shouldn't miss second-billed Patty Loveless, one of the best of the new breed—a real pistol, and a singer with a sob of steel. Also with Doug Stone. (Nassau Coliseum. 1-516 794-9300. Aug. 21 at 8.)

Elton John/Eric Clapton—If these two wealthy English gentlemen are feeling fiery, this will probably be splendid. It will definitely be big. (Shea Stadium. Aug. 21-22 at 6. For tickets, call 307-7171.)

The Black Crowes—This Georgia band drives critics crazy with its shameless musical and visual swipes from early-seventies Rolling Stones, Faces, and Allman Brothers. It doesn't help that the two brothers running the show, singer Chris Robinson and lead guitarist Rich, are anything but the Glimmer Twins when it comes to songwriting talent. But Keith Richards blues-rock guitar riffs and Mick-and-Rod mike-twirling attitude more than make up for a lack of memorable songs, at least in the eyes of the band's loyalists. The group's second album, "The Southern Harmony and Musical Companion," entered the charts this spring at No. 1, and this tour is doing very well indeed. Here's hoping that somewhere along the line the Crowes create something worthy of their models. (Beacon Theatre. Aug. 24-27 at 8.)

Los Lobos/NRBQ—A match made in Heaven. And the setting—Central Park SummerStage—is the best possible venue for the gig outside of some mythical perfect roadhouse on a lost highway. Los Lobos played at the Bottom Line some time ago to promote their album, "Kiko," and almost pushed the walls out. They're one of the rare bands that don't necessarily benefit from an intimate setting; instead, they almost need to be given some extra room to unleash all of that Mexican-American R. & B. power. NRBQ, on the other hand, is sometimes called "the world's greatest bar band," mainly because the four members have been having a great time playing tuneful rock together for twenty years, and because, at the drop of a hat, they can perform a note-perfect cover version of just about any song in the known universe. But the fresh air will do them good. (Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. Aug. 25 at 7. For tickets, call 307-7171.)

Bonnie Raitt/Lyle Lovett—One of the coolest tickets of the summer. The bluesy Ms. Raitt carries on with the happiest, most soulful comeback in recent memory. Mr. Lovett continues his long, inevitable, painfully slow climb toward a mild form of fame. His quizzical expression is a ruse, however; this is a performer with all the musical answers, and he knows we know he's hot. (Jones Beach Theatre. 1-516 221-1000. Aug. 26-27 at 8.)

k. d. lang—She's so much more than a butch pinup with an aversion to meat. She can also be soft, witty, and, despite her constant claims that she doesn't read, extremely literate. In lang's forthcoming video, "Miss Chatelaine," public image catches up to personal fact: she plays a bouffanted, forties-era femme fatale with a figure that only viewers of her Percy Adlon movie "salmonberries" (*still* unreleased in the U.S.) will fully recognize. She'll ditch the dress and heels for this concert, though, just as she's left country music for the land of her true foremothers: Joni, the Judys, Dionne, Peggy Lee. Her beautifully paced two-hour set starts out with selections from her latest album, "Ingenue," before moving into Orbison/Presley territory—all interpreted by the richest voice to hit popular music in a long time. When asked once where that voice came from, she said, "God—the boring answer." (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Aug. 26-27 at 8.)

Chaka Khan—With El DeBarge. (Beacon Theatre. Aug. 18 at 8.)

The Allman Brothers Band—Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 18 at 8.

Maceo Parker and the JB Horns—World Financial Center Plaza, Battery Park City. Aug. 19 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.

Richard Marx—Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 20 at 8.

The Four Tops/The Temptations/The Spinners—Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 22 at 8.

Melvin Taylor—With Chico Freeman, Arthur Blythe, and Stanton Davis. (Brooklyn Museum Sculpture Garden, Eastern Parkway. Aug. 23 at 3. Tickets at the door on the afternoon of the concert.)

Claude Williams Swing Quartet—Featuring Ken Peplowski. (St. Peter's Church, Lexington Ave. at 54th St. Aug. 23 at 7. Tickets at the door on the night of the concert.)

New York Rock and Soul Revue—Donald Fagen, Walter Becker, Michael McDonald, Boz Scaggs, Phoebe Snow, and Chuck Jackson. (Jones Beach Theatre. Aug. 23-24 at 8.)

Clint Black—In a concert postponed from July 15. (Meadowlands Summerfest. 1-201 935-3900. Aug. 26 at 8.)

Riverside Park Arts Festival—Aug. 22: Ray Mantilla & Space Station and Manny Oquendo & Libre. . . . ¶ Aug. 23: Houston Person and Etta Jones. (Rotunda, W. 79th St. near the Boat Basin. Performances at 4. No tickets necessary.)

SPORTS

PLAYGROUND stars and scrubs get a chance to showcase their moves at the Hoop-It-Up tournament—asphalt basketball's premier summer event—which comes to the Broadway Mall, in Hicksville, Long Island, on August 22-23 (beginning at 9 A.M.). Fifty courts will be set up in the mall's parking lot, where more than seven hundred and fifty teams will try to take their game to the next level. It's three-on-three (with a substitute), and the teams are placed in one of forty divisions, which range from kids (over ten) to college players to former pros to the Over Forty and the Two Century (team's age totals at least two hundred years) divisions. Teams may be coed, but there are separate men's and women's divisions, too.

"I play in a lot of tournaments, pro-am and other kinds, around the city," Paul Rappaport, captain of Woodrow Jewelers, told us. "This one is the best. They think of everything. What's great, too, is that it's at the mall. So I bring my wife, and if she gets restless she can shop." Woodrow Jewelers is four former Hobart College teammates, who will play in the top division. Somewhere farther down the line are the Weinsteins, a father-and-sons squad from West Hempstead. "We entered last year almost as a joke," Don Weinstein, the senior member, said. "We thought we'd just be screwing around, and it would be fun to play as a family. It was, but it was *competitive*. My boys just about had to cart me off to the home afterward. But it was worth it. You don't get to be in that kind of competitive situation with your sons very often—where you have to support each other, where everyone is equal—and it brought us together."

Hoop-It-Up travels around the country, from April to October, and, according to its promoters, attracts more than a hundred thousand players and a million spectators. Part of the proceeds go to charity—the U.S.O. of Metropolitan New York and the N.B.A.'s Stay-in-School program are the beneficiaries of the New York tournament. It's too late to enter a team this year but, besides watching some dazzling "pure" basketball, fans can take part in all sorts of shooting and dunking contests on both days. The Broadway Mall is a two-minute walk from the L.I.R.R. Hicksville station.

HOME TEAMS

Yankees—Vs. the Oakland A's, Aug. 18-20 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the California Angels, Aug. 21-22 at 7:30 and Aug. 23 at 1:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Milwaukee Brewers, Aug. 24-26 at 7:30.

Mets—Away until Aug. 28, when they face the Cincinnati Reds.

(The Yankees play at Yankee Stadium, 1-718 293-6000; and the Mets play at Shea Stadium, 1-718 507-8499.)

RACING

Horses—At Saratoga Springs: Daily, except Tuesdays, at 1. Through Aug. 31. . . . At Monmouth Park, Oceanport, N.J.: Daily, except Mondays and Thursdays, at 1:05. Through Sept. 6. . . . At Atlantic City Race Course: Tuesdays through Saturdays at 7:25. Through Sept. 5. . . . **Trotting** at Yonkers Raceway: Mondays through Saturdays at 8 and Tuesdays at 1; Sundays at 6:45. . . . At Saratoga Raceway, Saratoga Springs: Weeknights at 7:45.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"Lincoln Center Out-of-Doors"—Aug. 18 at 5:30: Risa Jaroslow & Dancers in a performance piece that involves small wading pools. . . . At 8:15: "Borderline Rendezvous," a dance-performance work by Cloud Chamber I.D.T., a group from the Netherlands. . . . ¶ Aug. 19 at 5:30: Dance works by Marlies Yearby, Zvi Gotheiner, and Hilary Easton. . . . At 8:15: "Borderline Rendezvous.". . . ¶ Aug. 20 at 6:30: The Quintet of the Americas. . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 5:30: Akua Dixon's Quartette Indigo. . . . At 8:15: A square dance, to which everyone is invited. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 2: Racca's Singers' Satellite, a reggae band. . . . At 5:30: A new work by Henry Brant (see Music listings). . . . At 8:30: A concert by the U.S. Coast Guard Band. . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 2: John McDowell and Karamo Sabally. . . . At 5:30: The Henry Brant work. . . . At 8:30: The U.S. Military Academy Bands. . . . ¶ Aug. 25 at 6:30: Teatro Guirigai, a company from Spain, performs "The Umpteenth Trip to El Dorado.". . . ¶ Aug. 26 at 6:30: Teatro Guirigai. (The festival continues through Aug. 30.)

Walks, Tours, and Other Activities for the History-Minded—Aug. 22 at noon: A ride on the Staten Island ferry, with commentary by retired ferryboat captain Ted Costa. Sponsored by the Museum of the City of New York. For reservations, which are required, call 534-1672, ext. 206. . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at noon: A walking tour of the Lower East Side that includes a sampling of various kinds of ethnic foods. Sponsored by Big Onion Walking Tours. For more information, call 439-1090. . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 1: A radical walking tour of Chelsea, which meets in front of the Chelsea Hotel. For more information, call 1-718 492-0069.

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26			

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN THE "IN BRIEF" SECTION, STARTING ON PAGE 14.

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)
Theatre 1: "Enchanted April" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 20: "Mediterraneo" (directed by Gabriele Salvatores, in Italian). From Aug. 21: "Light Sleeper" (Paul Schrader), with Willem Dafoe and Susan Sarandon.
Theatre 3: "The Living End" (Gregg Araki).
Theatre 4: "Johnny Suede" (Tom DiCillo), with Brad Pitt and Catherine Keener.
Theatre 5: "Night on Earth" (†).
Theatre 6: "Delicatessen" (Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro, in French).

Little Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
Aug. 17: Theatre closed.
Aug. 18: "The Journey, Chapters 1-6" (Peter Watkins).
Aug. 19: "The Journey, Chapters 7-13."
Aug. 20: "The Journey, Chapters 14-19."
From Aug. 21: "Wax or the Discovery of Television Among the Bees" (1991, David Blair).

Newman Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)
(Separate admission) "The Night of the Hunter" (1955, Charles Laughton), with Robert Mitchum, Shelley Winters, and Lillian Gish; and "Blue Velvet" (1986, David Lynch), with Kyle MacLachlan, Isabella Rossellini, Dennis Hopper, Laura Dern, and Dean Stockwell.

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 20: "Boomerang" (†). From Aug. 21: "Rapid Fire" (Dwight H. Little), with Brandon Lee.
Theatre 2: "Unforgiven" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Aug. 20: "Unlawful Entry" (†). From Aug. 21: "Christopher Columbus: The Discovery" (John Glen), with George Corraface.

Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)
Theatre 1: "Diggstown" (Michael Ritchie), with James Woods, Louis Gossett, Jr., and Bruce Dern.
Theatre 2: "Single White Female" (†).
Theatre 3: "A League of Their Own" (†).
Theatre 4: "Patriot Games" (†).
Theatre 5: "Single White Female" (†).
Theatre 6: "One False Move" (†).
Theatre 7: Through Aug. 20: "Stay Tuned" (Peter Hyams), with John Ritter and Pam Dawber. From Aug. 21: "Little Nemo: Adventures in Slumberland" (William T. Hurtz), an animated film.

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)
Theatre 1: "Sister Act" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Player" (†).
Theatre 3: "London Kills Me" (Hanif Kureishi), with Justin Chadwick.
Theatre 4: (Matinées only) "Honey, I Blew Up the Kid" (Randal Kleiser), with Rick Moranis and Marcia Strassman; and (evenings only) "The Adjuster" (Atom Egoyan).
Theatre 5: "Mo' Money" (Peter Macdonald), with Damon Wayans.
Theatre 6: "A Stranger Among Us" (†).
Theatre 7: "3 Ninjas" (Jon Turteltaub).

19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)
Theatre 1: "Batman Returns" (†).
Theatre 2: "Whispers in the Dark" (†).
Theatre 3: "Boomerang" (†).
Theatre 4: "Whispers in the Dark" (†).
Theatre 5: Through Aug. 20: "Bebe's Kids" (Bruce Smith), an animated film. From Aug. 21: "Christopher Columbus: The Discovery" (John Glen), with George Corraface.
Theatre 6: "Unforgiven" (†).

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)
Through Aug. 20: "The Playboys" (†).
From Aug. 21: "Clearcut" (Richard Bugajski), with Graham Greene.

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)
"Single White Female" (†).

Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)
Theatre 1: "3 Ninjas" (Jon Turteltaub).
Theatre 2: "Raising Cain" (†).
Theatre 3: "Diggstown" (Michael Ritchie), with James Woods, Louis Gossett, Jr., and Bruce Dern.
Theatre 4: "A Stranger Among Us" (†).

34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)
Theatre 1: "Whispers in the Dark" (†).
Theatre 2: "Unforgiven" (†).
Theatre 3: "Mo' Money" (Peter Macdonald), with Damon Wayans.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)
"Death Becomes Her" (†).

Eastside Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 55th. (755-3020)
Through Aug. 20: "Patriot Games" (†).
From Aug. 21: "The Ox" (Sven Nykvist, in Swedish).

Sutton I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)
Theatre 1: "3 Ninjas" (Jon Turteltaub), with Victor Wong.
Theatre 2: "One False Move" (†).

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)
Through Aug. 25: "Unlawful Entry" (†).
From Aug. 26: "Storyville" (Mark Frost), with James Spader, Joanne Whalley-Kilmer, and Jason Robards.

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)
"Raise the Red Lantern" (Zhang Yimou; in Chinese).

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)
Theatre 1: (Matinées only) "Bebe's Kids" (Bruce Smith), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Boomerang" (†).
Theatre 2: (Matinées only) "Pinocchio" (1940), a Walt Disney full-length cartoon; and (evenings only) "Prelude to a Kiss" (†).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)
"Honey, I Blew Up the Kid" (Randal Kleiser), with Rick Moranis and Marcia Strassman.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)
Theatre 1: "Mo' Money" (Peter Macdonald), with Damon Wayans.
Theatre 2: "Death Becomes Her" (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)
Theatre 1: "A Stranger Among Us" (†).
Theatre 2: "Enchanted April" (†).
Theatre 3: "Sister Act" (†).

Art East Cinema, 1st Ave. at 61st. (644-1111)
Through Aug. 20: "Mediterraneo" (Gabriele Salvatores, in Italian).
From Aug. 21: To be announced.

First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd. (752-4600)
Theatre 1: "Raising Cain" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 20: "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" (Fran Rubel Kuzui), with with Kristy Swanson and Luke Perry. From Aug. 21: "Little Nemo: Adventures in Slumberland" (William T. Hurtz), an animated film.
Theatre 3: "The Player" (†).
Theatre 4: "Raising Cain" (†).
Theatre 5: "Diggstown" (Michael Ritchie), with James Woods, Louis Gossett, Jr., and Bruce Dern.
Theatre 6: Through Aug. 20: "Diggstown." From Aug. 21: "Rapid Fire" (Dwight H. Little), with Brandon Lee.

Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)
Theatre 1: "Batman Returns" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 20: "Stay Tuned" (Peter Hyams), with John Ritter and Pam Dawber. From Aug. 21: "Christopher Columbus: The Discovery" (John Glen), with George Corraface.

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)
"Single White Female" (†).

New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)
Theatre 1: "Whispers in the Dark" (†).
Theatre 2: "Unforgiven" (†).

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)
Through Aug. 20: "London Kills Me" (Hanif Kureishi), with Justin Chadwick.
From Aug. 21: "Light Sleeper" (Paul Schrader), with Willem Dafoe and Susan Sarandon.

Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)
"A League of Their Own" (†).

East 85th Street, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)
(Matinées only) "Bebe's Kids" (Bruce Smith), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Boomerang" (†).

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 20: "Death Becomes Her" (†). From Aug. 21: "Rapid Fire" (Dwight H. Little), with Brandon Lee.
Theatre 2: "Raising Cain" (†).

Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (876-2400)
Theatre 1: "Single White Female" (†).
Theatre 2: "Single White Female" (†).
Theatre 3: "Whispers in the Dark" (†).
Theatre 4: Through Aug. 20: "Stay Tuned" (Peter Hyams), with John Ritter and Pam Dawber. From Aug. 21: "Christopher Columbus: The Discovery" (John Glen), with George Corraface.
Theatre 5: "Mo' Money" (Peter Macdonald), with Damon Wayans.
Theatre 6: "Diggstown" (Michael Ritchie), with James Woods, Louis Gossett, Jr., and Bruce Dern.
Theatre 7: "Unforgiven" (†).

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 20: (Matinées only) "Honey, I Blew Up the Kid" (Randal Kleiser), with Rick Moranis and Marcia Strassman; and (evenings only) "A Stranger Among Us" (†). From Aug. 21: "Little Nemo: Adventures in Slumberland" (William T. Hurtz), an animated film.
Theatre 2: "3 Ninjas" (Jon Turteltaub).

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 25: "Cup Final" (directed by Eran Riklis, in English, Arabic, and Hebrew), with Moshe Ivgi and Muhamad Bacri. From Aug. 26: "Wild Wheels" (Harrod Blank), a documentary.
Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.
Theatre 3: "Gas Food Lodging" (Allison Anders).

Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 25: "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" (Fran Rubel Kuzui), with Kristy Swanson and Luke Perry. From Aug. 26: "Laws of Gravity" (Nick Gomez).
Theatre 2: "Raising Cain" (†).

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)
Theatre 1: "Death Becomes Her" (†).
Theatre 2: "Whispers in the Dark" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)
Theatre 1: "Deep Blues" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Best Intentions" (†).
Theatre 3: "Raise the Red Lantern" (Zhang Yimou; in Chinese); and "Europa Europa" (Agnieszka Holland, in German and Russian).
Theatre 4: Through Aug. 20: "Zentropa" (Lars Von Trier, in English and German). From Aug. 21: "The Ox" (Sven Nykvist, in Swedish).

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "Mo' Money" (Peter Macdonald), with Damon Wayans.
Theatre 2: "Raising Cain" (†).
Theatre 3: "Death Becomes Her" (†).
Theatre 4: "Diggstown" (Michael Ritchie), with James Woods, Louis Gossett, Jr., and Bruce Dern.
Theatre 5: "A League of Their Own" (†).
Theatre 6: "Stay Tuned" (Peter Hyams), with John Ritter and Pam Dawber.
Theatre 7: "Single White Female" (†).
Theatre 8: "Raising Cain" (†).
Theatre 9: "Single White Female" (†).

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 20: (Matinées only) "Bebe's Kids" (Bruce Smith), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Unlawful Entry" (†). From Aug. 21: "Little Nemo: Adventures in Slumberland" (William T. Hurtz), an animated film.
Theatre 2: "3 Ninjas" (Jon Turteltaub).
Theatre 3: Through Aug. 20: (Matinées only) "Honey, I Blew Up the Kid" (Randal Kleiser), with Rick Moranis and Marcia Strassman; and (evenings only) "A Stranger Among Us" (†). From Aug. 21: "Rapid Fire" (Dwight H. Little), with Brandon Lee.

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"3 Ninjas" (Jon Turteltaub), with Victor Wong.

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: "Single White Female" (†).
Theatre 2: "Sister Act" (†).
Theatre 3: "A League of Their Own" (†).
Theatre 4: "Patriot Games" (†).
Theatre 5: "Raising Cain" (†).

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Theatre 6: Through Aug. 20: (Matinées only) "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" (Fran Rubel Kuzui), with Kristy Swanson and Luke Perry; and (evenings only) "Unlawful Entry" (†). From Aug. 21: "Little Nemo: Adventures in Slumberland" (William T. Hurtz), an animated film.

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"Death Becomes Her" (†).

Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
"Patriot Games" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"Mistress" (Barry Primus), with Robert Wuhl.

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
Theatre 1: "Prelude to a Kiss" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Best Intentions" (†).

Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
"Howards End" (†).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"The Player" (†).

Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"A Stranger Among Us" (†).

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"A League of Their Own" (†).

Lincoln Plaza 1, 2, and 3, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "La Discrète" (Christian Vincent; in French).
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 20: "The Hairdresser's Husband" (Patrice Leconte, in French), with Jean Rochefort and Anna Galiena. From Aug. 21: "A Brief History of Time" (Errol Morris), a documentary.
Theatre 3: "A Tale of Springtime" (Eric Rohmer, in French).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"Death Becomes Her" (†).

84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: "Mo' Money" (Peter Macdonald), with Damon Wayans.
Theatre 2: "Single White Female" (†).
Theatre 3: Through Aug. 20: (Matinées only) "Bebe's Kids" (Bruce Smith), an animated film; and (evenings only) "Boomerang" (†). From Aug. 21: "Light Sleeper" (Paul Schrader), with Willem Dafoe and Susan Sarandon.
Theatre 4: Through Aug. 20: "Stay Tuned" (Peter Hyams), with John Ritter and Pam Dawber. From Aug. 21: "Christopher Columbus: The Discovery" (John Glen), with George Corraface.
Theatre 5: "Unforgiven" (†).
Theatre 6: "Whispers in the Dark" (†).

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "Diggstown" (Michael Ritchie), with James Woods, Louis Gossett, Jr., and Bruce Dern.
Theatre 2: "Raising Cain" (†).

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: "3 Ninjas" (Jon Turteltaub).
Theatre 2: Through Aug. 20: (Matinées only) "Honey, I Blew Up the Kid" (Randal Kleiser), with Rick Moranis and Marcia Strassman; and (evenings only) "Sister Act" (†). From Aug. 21: "Rapid Fire" (Dwight H. Little), with Brandon Lee.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: Through Aug. 20: "Basic Instinct" (directed by Paul Verhoeven), with Michael Douglas and Sharon Stone. From Aug. 21: "Christopher Columbus: The Discovery" (John Glen), with George Corraface.
Theatre 2: "Universal Soldier" (Roland Emmerich), with Jean-Claude Van Damme and Dolph Lundgren.
Theatre 3: "Unforgiven" (†).
Theatre 4: "Batman Returns" (†).
Theatre 5: "Stay Tuned" (Peter Hyams), with John Ritter and Pam Dawber.
Theatre 6: "Diggstown" (Michael Ritchie), with James Woods, Louis Gossett, Jr., and Bruce Dern.
Theatre 7: Through Aug. 20: "Lethal Weapon 3" (Richard Donner), with Mel Gibson, Danny Glover, and Joe Pesci. From Aug. 21: "Rapid Fire" (Dwight H. Little), with Brandon Lee.

Embassy I, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
"Whispers in the Dark" (†).

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: "Bebe's Kids" (Bruce Smith), an animated film.
Theatre 2: "Boomerang" (†).
Theatre 3: "Honey, I Blew Up the Kid" (Randal Kleiser), with Rick Moranis and Marcia Strassman.

Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"Mo' Money" (Peter Macdonald), with Damon Wayans.

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: "Single White Female" (†).
Theatre 2: "Raising Cain" (†).

REVIVAL HOUSES

Le Cinematographe, 15 Vandam St. (675-4680)
Aug. 18-19: "Too Late Blues" (1962, directed by John Cassavetes), with Bobby Darin, Stella Stevens, and Cassavetes; and "A Child Is Waiting" (1963, Cassavetes), with Burt Lancaster and Judy Garland.
Aug. 20-23: "Them!" (1954, Gordon Douglas), with James Whitmore, Edmund Gwenn, James Arness, and Joan Weldon.
Aug. 24-25: "I Bury the Living" (1957, Albert Band), with Richard Boone and Theodore Bikel; and "Nightmare" (1956, Maxwell Shane), with Edward G. Robinson and Kevin McCarthy.
From Aug. 26: "The Long Goodbye" (1973, Robert Altman), with Elliott Gould, Nina Van Pallandt, Sterling Hayden, and Mark Rydell; and "California Split" (1974, Altman), with Elliott Gould and George Segal.

Carole Lombard and Fred MacMurray in "Hands Across the Table"

8th St. Playhouse, 52 W. 8th. (674-6515)
Through Aug. 18: "Until the End of the World" (1991, Wim Wenders); and "Wings of Desire" (1988, Wenders; in German, French, and English).
Aug. 19-20: "La Belle Noiseuse" (Jacques Rivette, in French), with Michel Piccoli.
Aug. 21-22: "Duck Soup" (1933, Leo McCarey), "Animal Crackers" (1930, Victor Heerman), and "Horse Feathers" (1932, Norman LcLeod), all with the Marx Brothers.
Aug. 23-25: "Pinocchio" (1940), a Walt Disney full-length cartoon; and "Cyrano de Bergerac" (1990, Jean-Paul Rappeneau; in French), with Gérard Depardieu.
From Aug. 26: "Via Appia" (Jochen Hick).

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Through Aug. 20: "The Tingler" (1960, William Castle), with Vincent Price.
Aug. 21-22: "Dracula" (see page 17); and "Frankenstein" (†).
Aug. 23-24: "Aelita" (1924, Yakov Protazanov; a Russian silent film); and "She" (1935, Irving Pichel and Lansing C. Holden), with Randolph Scott, Helen Mack, and Helen Gahagan Douglas.
Aug. 25: "The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms" (1953, Eugène Lourié), with Paula Raymond and Paul Christian; and "Gorgo" (1961, Eugène Lourié), with Bill Travers.
Aug. 26: "Hangover Square" (1945, John Brahm), with Laird Cregar and Linda Darnell; and "The Undying Monster" (1942, Brahm), with James Ellison.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Aug. 18: "The Wrong Man" (1956, Alfred Hitchcock), with Henry Fonda, Vera Miles, and Anthony Quayle; and "Dial M for Murder" (1954, Hitchcock), with Ray Milland, Grace Kelly, and Robert Cummings.
Aug. 19: "Luna" (1979, Bernardo Bertolucci), with Jill Clayburgh and Matthew Barry; and "The Conformist" (1970, Bernardo Bertolucci; in Italian), with Jean-Louis Trintignant, Stefania Sandrelli, and Dominique Sanda.
Aug. 20: "The Spy Who Came In from the Cold" (1965, Martin Ritt), with Richard Burton, Claire Bloom, and Oskar Werner; and "The Man Who Never Was" (1956, Ronald Neame), with Clifton Webb.
Aug. 21-22: "The Bicycle Thief" (1949, Vittorio De Sica; in Italian); and "Miracle in Milan" (1951, De Sica; in Italian).
Aug. 23: "A Night at the Opera" (†); and "A Day at the Races" (1937, Sam Wood), with the Marx Brothers, Margaret Dumont, Maureen O'Sullivan, and Allan Jones.
Aug. 24: "Vampyr" (1932, Carl Dreyer, in German), with Julian West, Henriette Gérard, Rena Mandel, and Sybille Schmitz; and "Day of Wrath" (1943, Dreyer; in Danish), with Lisbeth Movin and Anna Svierkier.
Aug. 25: "Dr. No" (1963, Terence Young), with Sean Connery, Ursula Andress, and Joseph Wiseman; and "Thunderball" (1965, Young), with Connery, Adolfo Celi, Claudine Auger, and Luciana Paluzzi.
Aug. 26: "Walkabout" (1971, Nicolas Roeg); and "Picnic at Hanging Rock" (1975, Peter Weir), with Rachel Roberts and Dominic Guard.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Aug. 17 at 3 and Aug. 21 at noon: "sex, lies, and videotape" (1989, directed by Steven Soderbergh), with James Spader, Peter Gallagher, Andie MacDowell, and Laura San Giacomo. . . . ¶ Aug. 17 at 6 and Aug. 18 at noon: "Monty Python's The Meaning of Life" (1983, Terry Jones). . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 3: "Accident" (1967, Joseph Losey), with Dirk Bogarde, Stanley Baker, and Vivien Merchant. . . . ¶ Aug. 18 at 6: "The Roof" (1957, Vittorio De Sica; in Italian). . . . ¶ Aug. 20 at noon: "The Fiancés" (1963, Ermanno Elmi; in Italian). . . . ¶ Aug. 20 at 3 and Aug. 23 at 5: "Even Dwarfs Started Small" (1970, Werner Herzog; in German), with Helmut Döring. . . . ¶ Aug. 20 at 6 and Aug. 21 at 3: "Kings of the Road" (1976, Wim Wenders; in German), with Ruediger Vogler and Hanns Zischler. . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 6 and Aug. 23 at noon: "Ali: Fear Eats the Soul" (1974, Rainer Werner Fassbinder; in German), with Brigitte Mira. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at noon and 2: "Mr. Hulot's Holiday" (1953, Jacques Tati; in French), with Tati. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 4 and Aug. 24 at 6: "Kagemusha" ("The Shadow Warrior"; 1980, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese), with Tatsuya Nakadai. . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 2:30: "Mr. Klein" (1977, Joseph Losey; in French), with Alain Delon, Jeanne Moreau, and Michel Lonsdale. . . . ¶ Aug. 24 at noon and Aug. 25 at 3: "A Special Day" (†). . . . ¶ Aug. 24 at 2:30: "Kanal" (1957, Andrzej Wajda; in Polish).

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—Aug. 20 at 2, 6, and 10: "Zou Zou" (†). . . . ¶ Aug. 20 at 4 and 8: "Coffee Colored Children" (1988, Ngozi Onwurah), "The Body Beautiful" (1991, Onwurah), and "Perfect Image?" (1990, Maureen Blackwood). . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 2, 5:15, and 8:30 and Aug. 22 at 5:15 and 8:30: "Twentieth Century" (1934, Howard Hawks), with John Barrymore, Carole Lombard, and Ralph Forbes. . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 3:45, 7, and 10:15 and Aug. 22 at 10:15: "Bolero" (†). . . . ¶ Aug. 22-23 at 2: "Wee Willie Winkie" (1937, John Ford), with Shirley Temple, C. Aubrey Smith, Victor McLaglen, and Cesar Romero. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 4: "Matchmaking Mamas" (1929), "Run, Girl, Run" (1928), and "The Campus Carmen" (1928), all silent short films, with Lombard. . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 3:45 and 9:45 and Aug. 24 at 3:30: "Nothing Sacred" (1937, William Wellman), with Lombard, Fredric March, Walter Connolly, and Charles Winninger. . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 6:45 and Aug. 24 at 6:45 and 10: "The Princess Comes Across" (1936, William K. Howard), with Lombard, Fred MacMurray, and Alison Skipworth. . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 5:15 and 8:15 and Aug. 24 at 2, 5, and 8:30: "Hands Across

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MOVIE HOUSES–Cont'd

the Table" (†). . . . ¶ Aug. 25 at 2, 5:30, and 9: "They Knew What They Wanted" (†). . . . ¶ Aug. 25 at 3:45 and 7:15: "True Confession" (1937, Wesley Ruggles), with Carole Lombard, John Barrymore, and Fred MacMurray.

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077) "American Impressionist: A Robert Altman Retrospective." Aug. 22 at 2: "A Wedding" (†). . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 4:30: "Quintet" (1979), with Paul Newman, Vittorio Gassman, Bibi Andersson, Fernando Rey, and Brigitte Fossey. . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 2: "A Perfect Couple" (1979), with Marta Heflin and Paul Dooley. . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 4:30: "Health" (1980), with Carol Burnett, Glenda Jackson, Lauren Bacall, and James Garner.

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—Aug. 21 at 7: A program of films by Marie Menken. . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 8: "Film Portrait" (1971, Jerome Hill). . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 9:30: A program of films by Peter Kubelka and Maya Deren. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 4: "The General" (1926, Buster Keaton and Clyde Bruckman; silent), with Keaton and Marion Mack. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 6: "Kinoglaz" (1925, Dziga Vertov). . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 7:45: A program of short films by Jean Genet, Robert Frank and Alfred Leslie, Ken Jacobs and Bob Fleischner, Helen Levitt, and Willard Maas. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 9:45: A program of short films by Dwinell Grant, Ken Jacobs, and Hollis Frampton. . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 3: "Intolerance" (1916, D. W. Griffith; silent), with Mae March and Constance Talmadge. . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 6:15: "Stride, Soviet!" (1926, Vertov). . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 7:45: "A Sixth of the World" (1926, Vertov). . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 9:15: "Scotch Tape" (1962) and "Flaming Creatures" (1963), both by Jack Smith.

Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., State Office Building, 163 W. 125th St. (873-5040)—Aug. 20 at 6 and 9: "Black Athena" (1992), "We Came Before Columbus" (1989, Clemson Brown), and "Black History: Lost, Stolen or Strayed" (1969, George Foster). . . . ¶ Aug. 21 at 6:30: "Dolemite" (1974, D'Urville Martin), with Rudy Ray Moore; and "The Human Tornado" (1975, Cliff Roquemore), with Moore. . . . ¶ Aug. 22 at 6:30: "Putney Swope" (1969, Robert Downey), with Arnold Johnson and Antonio Fargas; and "Hollywood Shuffle" (1987, Robert Townsend), with Townsend. . . . ¶ Aug. 23 at 1, 3:30, and 6: "The Spook Who Sat by the Door" (1983, Ivan Dixon), with Lawrence Cook; and "The FBI's War on Black America" (1990, Denis Mueller).

IN BRIEF

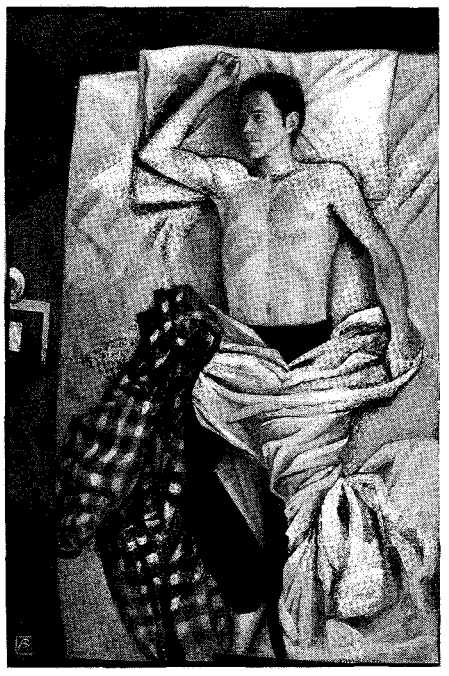
SEE ABOVE FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS.
IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

(The following notes are by Arlene Croce, Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

Batman Returns—Tim Burton's sequel to his phenomenally successful 1989 "Batman" doesn't try to top the first picture, either with splashier special effects or with loftier pretensions to significance; nor does it simply go through the motions, repeating the surefire stuff with a self-satisfied air of professionalism. It's a blend of playful novelty and reassuring familiarity—a difficult mixture to get right. This time, the hero (again Michael Keaton) does battle with a greedy businessman named Max Shreck (Christopher Walken) and the roly-poly arch-criminal known as the Penguin (Danny DeVito). And whenever Batman ventures out on one of his nocturnal crime-fighting missions, he runs into a mysterious woman who dresses like a cat and carries a whip. The hilariously twisted relationship between the hero and the Catwoman (Michelle Pfeiffer) plays like an apache dance in animal costumes, and it's the glory of the movie. The cat clothes seem to release something strange and wild in Pfeiffer: her performance is ferociously sexy and uninhibitedly, over-the-top funny. As in the first movie, Burton gives the material a luxurious masked-ball quality and a sly contemporary wit without violating the myth's low, cheesy comic-book origins. He's an artist who's comfortable with both the higher aspirations and the lower instincts of his nature as an entertainer: he and Batman are an ideal match. Screenplay by Daniel Waters; cinematography by Stefan Czapsky; score by Danny Elfman; production design by Bo Welch.—T.R. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/29/92.) (19th Street East 6, Gemini, and Criterion Center.)

The Best Intentions—It boasts the built-in interest of a script by Ingmar Bergman, dramatizing the courtship and early married life of his parents. Bille August directed, and Jorgen Persson did the cinematography; their square filmmaking has an antique sheen. But they've made an orderly movie about disorderly conduct. At three hours, the drama, about the mismatch between a tormented, self-denying pastor (Samuel Froler) and a coddled bourgeois woman (Pernilla August), is one prolonged, unrevealing study in frustration. Of course we know that these two won't live happily ever after; they did give birth to Ingmar Bergman. With its inexorable depiction of increasing marital woe, this film is the cinematic equivalent of predestination. Except for the expressive Max von Sydow (in the role of Bergman's maternal grandfather), the actors don't operate in a climate of free will; they register carefully prescribed dollops of anguish. In Swedish.—M.S. (7/27/92) (Quad Cinema, and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

Bolero (1934)—George Raft, wearing pants that start at the armpits, and Carole Lombard (before she becames a star comedienne), in clinging satin. The Astaire-and-Rogers pictures were making money for R.K.O., so somebody at Paramount got the idea of passing off Raft and Lombard as a dance team. The studio poured every sultry effect shameless people could dream up into this movie, and, almost incredibly, got by with it—though it was low camp even then. In the big number, set to Ravel's "Bolero," Raft and Lombard gyrate on a circular elevated platform while bare-chested black men sit around them, pounding on drums. Some of those who saw the picture in the thirties could never again keep a straight face when they heard that music. With Ray Milland, Sally Rand, and William Frawley; directed by Wesley Ruggles.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 21-22.)



Willem Dafoe in "Light Sleeper"

Boomerang—Set in a world where entire upscale companies are run by African-Americans, this Eddie Murphy vehicle tries hard to be positive. It's a pity that the movie isn't any good. Murphy is a Manhattan marketing hot shot and ladies' man who ends up working under the woman of his dreams (Robin Givens) when their cosmetics firms merge. She treats him as cavalierly as he treated the previous women in his life; the script hands out one earnest lesson after another, so that he can learn what it feels like to be used. Givens knows how to employ her flashing eyes and chiselled, haughty features for comic effect, but she doesn't get a single clever line. As the gal who strives to save the hero, Halle Berry is so much more accessible than Givens, while being equally pretty, that dramatically there's no contest. Murphy has a couple of peppy scenes with David Alan Grier and Martin Lawrence, who play his best buddies, but a lot of the time he acts unconvincingly modest. The screenplay (by Barry W. Blaustein and David Sheffield), with its constant references to Murphy's sexual magnetism, does all the bragging for him. Padded with manic interludes involving Eartha Kitt, Geoffrey Holder, and Grace Jones; directed by Reginald Hudlin.—M.S. (7/13/92) (19th Street East 6, and Embassy. . . . ¶ Manhattan Twin, and East 85th Street. Evenings only. . . . ¶ Movieland 8th Street Triplex; through Aug. 20. . . . ¶ 84th Street Sixplex; through Aug. 20, evenings only.)

Death Becomes Her—With Meryl Streep, Bruce Willis, and Goldie Hawn; directed by Robert Zemeckis. (Reviewed in this issue.) (34th St. East, Coronet, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Ziegfeld, and Regency. . . . ¶ Park & 86th Street Cinemas; through Aug. 20.)

Deep Blues—This collaboration between the documentary maker Robert Mugge and the music critic Robert Palmer (who wrote the sweeping, inclusive 1981 history of the same name), is a lovably rough-hewn presentation of rural blues today. The movie is a guided tour. Dave A. Stewart, of Eurythmics and the Spiritual Cowboys, hired Mugge and Palmer to film and record examples of this living tradition; Palmer takes Stewart from Beale Street, in Memphis, to the northern-Mississippi hills, where the music hasn't changed for generations. When Stewart leaves to continue creating his own sounds, Palmer goes south, to the Delta (and towns like Greenville, Clarksdale, and Bentonia), where the deepest blues were born in the shacks and juke joints of black sharecroppers. Mugge's stripped-down filmmaking suits Palmer's direct approach. The whole movie has a first-person feel to it: Palmer's commentary and talent-scouting are filled with off-the-cuff revelations, and his affection for the culture is catching. The array of little-known performers includes R. L. Burnside, Roosevelt (Booba) Barnes, Lonnie Pitchford, and a powerhouse called Big Jack Johnson.—M.S. (8/10/92) (Quad Cinema.)

Enchanted April—Adapted by Peter Barnes from Elizabeth von Arnim's 1922 novel, this period romance has a healthy sprinkling of bewitchments. The lead characters are two proper middle-class English ladies, played by Josie Lawrence and Miranda Richardson, who, partly to get away from their husbands, pool their resources to rent an Italian villa named San Salvatore for a month. They ultimately share expenses with an austere, cultured widow (Joan Plowright) and a gorgeous, bored aristocrat (Polly Walker). Italy awakens the women's sensuality and imagination, and gives them perspective; Lawrence and Richardson end up jolting their deadhead husbands (played by Alfred Molina and Jim Broadbent) back to life. The director, Mike Newell, handles the performers deftly and sympathetically, from the wonderfully ebullient Lawrence and the ravishing Walker to the robustly comical Plowright; Michael Kitchen contributes a tour de force of eccentric charm as the villa's owner. If the film, with its brittle, satiric London scenes and its expansive Italian ones, breaks too distinctly into pieces, the magic of the sunnier locations seals the cracks. The cinematographer, Rex Maidment, captures the enveloping pastoral euphoria of San Salvatore; the movie was shot at the same Mediterranean estate where von Arnim composed her novel.—M.S. (8/10/92) (Angelika Film Center, and Cinema II.)

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Frankenstein (1931)—Probably the most famous of all horror films, and one of the best. It was not the first version of the Mary Shelley novel (there had been a "Frankenstein" as early as 1910), but this version, directed by James Whale, with Boris Karloff as the sad, lumbering Monster and Colin Clive as the high-strung, tormented Dr. Frankenstein, caught the imagination of a large public—and has held it for decades. With Mae Clarke, John Boles, Edward Van Sloan, and Dwight Frye as the Monster's first victim.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Aug. 21-22.)

Hands Across the Table (1935)—Carole Lombard as a manicurist on the lookout for a wealthy husband meets Fred MacMurray, a fellow who grew up rich but is now broke and intends to marry an heiress. Cynical about romance, these two hang out together while waiting to land their prospective mates. Hers is to be a kindly millionaire (dreary Ralph Bellamy); his is the pineapple king's daughter (Astrid Allywn). But what you expect to happen happens. As the manicurist puts it, in blunt, archetypal thirties terms—"Hard-boiled Hannah was going to fall in love with the bankroll! You can't run away from love." This isn't one of the first-string slapstick romances of its period, but it's a pretty fair example of the second string. Basically uninspired, it's determinedly irreverent. You can see the jokes being set up; when the payoff comes, you're already tired. But MacMurray knows how to read a good line when he gets one, and though he isn't the subtlest of farceurs, that works just fine with Lombard because of her gift for uninhibited comedy. Lombard is the rare performer whose enjoyment of her jokes adds to the audience's pleasure. Mitchell Leisen, directing his first comedy, had Ernst Lubitsch, the production chief at Paramount, guiding him. With William Demarest, Ruth Donnelly, Marie Prevost, and Edward Gargan. From a Viña Delmar story, adapted by Norman Krasna, Vincent Lawrence, and Herbert Fields. Cinematography by Ted Tetzlaff.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 23-24.)

Howards End—James Ivory's movie version of the 1910 E. M. Forster novel is a handsome and intelligent piece of work: a faithful, well-paced, and carefully crafted dramatization of a very good story. The heroine, Margaret Schlegel (Emma Thompson), is a thirtyish Englishwoman of German ancestry who lives with her sister and her brother in a London town house. The plot brings the cultured and rather high-minded Schlegels in contact with a very different sort of family, the Wilcoxes, who appear to represent English values at their most infuriatingly solid and complacent. The emotional core of the movie is the brief, unlikely friendship that develops between Margaret and conservative Ruth Wilcox (Vanessa Redgrave), a woman who inhabits a narrow world so profoundly, and with such enormous feeling, that she transforms it. Redgrave is at her most radiant in this role. And Thompson, whose character is meant to be seen as the heir to Mrs. Wilcox's thoroughly English kind of spirituality, comes through with a thrilling, original performance; she carries the movie. These luminous performances go a long way toward putting Forster's ambitious ideas across on the screen. (Anthony Hopkins, as the no-nonsense businessman Henry Wilcox, is awfully good, too.) The story holds us for the full two hours and twenty minutes that the movie takes to tell it; Ivory and his screenwriter, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, have done a skillful and sensitive job of adaptation. All that's missing, really, is the elusive quality that makes Forster such a brave, moving writer: his constant striving to see beyond the story, to see through it, to transcend it. Also with Helena Bonham Carter, Samuel West, James Wilby, Nicola Duffett, Prunella Scales, and Adrian Ross Magenty.—T.R. (5/4/92) (Fine Arts.)

A League of Their Own—Penny Marshall's fictional account of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League has no mind of its own. Marshall directed it with both eyes on the audience. She and the screenwriting team of Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel slap together a bare-bones narrative (about the league's 1943 début season) and dress it up with set-piece gags and sentimental ploys. All they want is for people to come out saying that they laughed and they cried. The lead characters are Dottie Hinson (Geena Davis) and her kid sister, Kit Keller (Lori Petty), who catch and pitch, respectively, for the Rockford Peaches and act out their sibling tensions on the baseball diamond and in the locker room. Tom Hanks mugs ingratiatingly as Jimmy Dugan, the Rockford coach and an alcoholic former slugger, and Madonna sashays through the supporting role of All the Way Mae, a ballplayer who tests the league's deportment code. This movie aims for the tear ducts and the funny bone as ruthlessly as the summer's big action-fantasy hits go after the viscera. It unfolds in field-of-dreams land—complete with cornstalks.—M.S. (7/13/92) (Village Theatre VII, Tower East, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, and 62nd & Broadway.)

A Night at the Opera (1935)—The Marx Brothers sometimes said that this was their best film; it isn't, but it was their greatest hit. Two beautifully stuffed American targets—grand opera and high society—are left dismantled, flapping like scarecrows. (If you ever could listen to "Il Trovatore" with a straight face, you can never do so again.) Many writers have tried to analyze Marx Brothers wit, coming up with little monographs on "dissociated thinking," "disguised social protest," or "commedia dell'arte." Think about it too much and sanity, like a lettuce leaf, begins to wilt and curl at the edges. The Marx Brothers keep turning corners you didn't know were there, and while you're trying to break down the content of lines like Groucho's "You big bully, why are you hitting that little bully?" you miss the series of non sequiturs that are piling up on top of it. George S. Kaufman and Morrie Ryskind did the script, from a story by James Kevin McGuinness, and with additional material by Al Boasberg; Sam Wood directed. The cast includes Groucho's perennial grand-dame inamorata, Margaret Dumont, the most stately of stooges. There are also the vocalizing lovers, Kitty Carlisle and Allan Jones, whom Irving Thalberg, the producer and a master diagnostician of popular taste, put in for people (what people?) to "identify with," and the cruel villain, Walter Woolf King. This comedy has its classic sequence: the stateroom scene, which is widely regarded as the funniest five minutes in screen history. It will sustain you through the dreadful duets. With Sig Rumann.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Aug. 23.)

Night on Earth—This anthology film, written and directed by Jim Jarmusch ("Stranger Than Paradise"), has a gimmicky premise. Each of its five stories takes place in a different city, and each is about a taxicab ride. All the trips are going on at the same time, but in different time zones, so there's an illusion of temporal progress: the picture begins at sunset in Los Angeles and ends at dawn in Helsinki. (The intervening episodes take place in New York, Paris, and Rome.) It's a feeble but serviceable conceit; if the sketches were funny, we'd barely notice the preciousness of the structure. Unfortunately, the material is very thin, and the movie doesn't vary its style from sketch to sketch: Jarmusch sticks doggedly to his trademark deadpan manner. The comedian Roberto Benigni, playing a motor-mouth cabbie in the Italian episode, briefly enlivens the picture with a riotous erotic monologue. But, for the most part, the movie induces in the viewer an eerie, suspended feeling that mimics the time-stands-still monotony of a long airplane journey. It tries for a chipper, lighthearted tone, but it gives the audience a gruelling flight—a red-eye to nowhere. Also with Winona Ryder, Gena Rowlands, Giancarlo Esposito, Armin Mueller-Stahl, Rosie Perez, Isaach de Bankolé, Béatrice Dalle, and Matti Pellonpää. In English, French, Italian, and Finnish.—T.R. (5/18/92) (Angelika Film Center.)

One False Move—Skillfully performed and welcomely unpredictable, this low-budget crime film, made by actor-turned-director Carl Franklin, starts out as a herky-jerky exploitation piece, then turns into something better. After a jolting series of execution-style killings, a trio of crooks go on the lam from Los Angeles to Star City, Arkansas, where two L.A. lawmen and a local sheriff lie in wait. What saves the opening sequences is the inspired pairing of a black sociopath (Michael Beach) and a white psychopath (played by Billy Bob Thornton, who co-wrote the script with Tom Epperson). Beach's inhuman brilliance and Thornton's edgy earthiness make them deadly companions. Cynda Williams, as Thornton's African-

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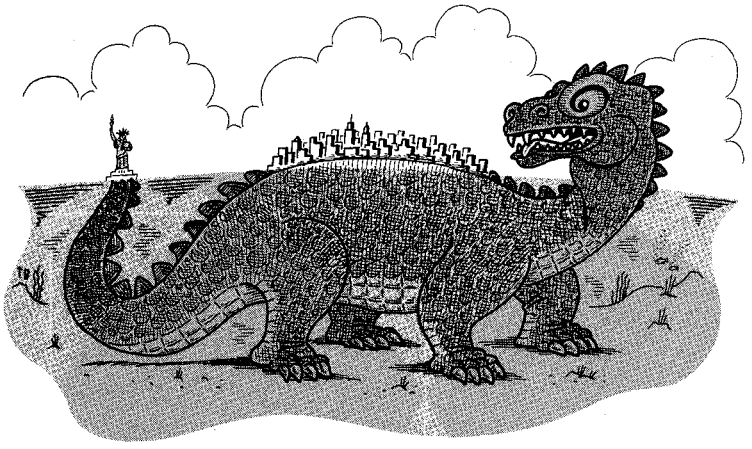
IN BRIEF–Cont'd

American lover, hits on marvellous combinations of ingenuousness and amorality, even when the script plays peekaboo with motivation. Meanwhile, Star City's sheriff (Bill Paxton) tries to persuade the visiting metropolitan cops (Jim Metzler and Earl Billings) that he's ripe for big-time law enforcement. Paxton lays on the hick ingratiation, but midway through he shows how this good ole boy grows into a good ole man. Like Paxton, the movie improves as it goes along; it leaves hokum as well as wholesale carnage far behind.—M.S. (7/27/92) (Village Theatre VII, and Sutton.)

Patriot Games—Phillip Noyce's film, adapted from one of Tom Clancy's jillion-selling suspense novels, is a much more effective thriller than it has any right to be. The screenwriters, W. Peter Iliff and Donald Stewart, have eliminated much of the novel's hot air without entirely knocking the wind out of the material; the script tones down Clancy's right-wing ideology and gives the story some straightforward action-movie narrative drive. The plot, which pits Irish terrorists against an Annapolis history professor and sometime C.I.A. analyst named Jack Ryan (Harrison Ford), is ridiculous, boys'-adventure stuff, but the filmmakers almost put it across. Noyce handles the action sequences beautifully: they're lucid and exciting, and their construction has a kind of formal elegance that's oddly satisfying. (He's less successful with the scenes of the Ryan family's domestic bliss, which are meant to establish Jack's credentials as a champion of traditional values.) Ford brings a welcome trace of ambivalence to his character's heroics—a sense that Ryan isn't altogether proud of the lethal efficiency he displays when's he's drawn into combat. Sean Bean, Richard Harris, and (especially) James Fox do nice work in supporting roles. This is an expert, entertaining genre picture. Noyce and his team serve Clancy's crude material well—too well, probably. Also with Anne Archer (who's awful), Thora Birch, James Earl Jones, Samuel L. Jackson, and Patrick Bergin.—T.R. (6/15/92) (Village Theatre VII, Worldwide Cinemas, and Festival. . . . ¶ Eastside Cinema; through Aug. 20.)

The Playboys—This absorbing, uneven romantic comedy-drama, set in a small Irish town in 1957, takes its name from a travelling troupe. The heroine is an unwed mother named Tara (Robin Wright). She challenges every male authority figure in town and drives all the men wild—especially the violent, alcoholic constable, Sergeant Hegarty (Albert Finney), who seethes when he sees her with her actor lover Tom (Aidan Quinn). The screenwriters, Shane Connaughton (who co-wrote "My Left Foot") and Kerry Crabbe, are full of ideas and observations about orthodox religion, claustrophobic village mores, the craziness of life in a divided country, and the last gasp of strolling players before TV's ascendancy. Wright and Quinn are well matched, and the director, Gillies MacKinnon, and his cinematographer, Jack Conroy, provide images that sparkle with amorous possibilities. But the filmmakers don't funnel their panoply of themes gracefully into Tara's story. Her affair with Tom comes off as a foil to Finney's passionate portrait of stewed wrath and despair. He endows a clenched, masochistic character with such scale and force that he takes over the movie.—M.S. (5/18/92) (Gramercy; through Aug. 20.)

The Player—The title character of Robert Altman's new movie is a young Hollywood studio executive named Griffin Mill (Tim Robbins), who, for no very good reason, murders an aspiring screenwriter. The picture is a brilliant dark comedy about the death of American filmmaking. It's like a documentary about a mirage: the world it shows us is sunlit and shimmering, and the people have the thin presence of holograms. Altman is doing one of his specialties here—exploring an odd American subculture—and when his idiosyncratic realism is applied to the insular, constantly self-regarding community of Hollywood "players" it has an almost hallucinatory effect. The movie has the exhilarating nonchalance of the director's seventies classics, and its tone is volatile, elusive: with breathtaking assurance, it veers from psychological-thriller suspense to goofball comedy to icy satire. Altman turns the self-reflective world of Hollywood into a fun house in which every grotesque distortion somehow appears to us as a newly discovered, paradoxical truth. Robbins gives a layered, richly suggestive performance—the sort of performance that Altman's style, at its best, produces without obvious effort. At sixty-seven, Altman still seems like the youngest filmmaker in America. Also with Greta Scacchi, Peter Gallagher, Fred Ward, Whoopi Goldberg, Cynthia Stevenson, Vincent D'Onofrio, Lyle Lovett, Dean Stockwell, and Richard E. Grant; dozens of movie stars (and a handful of writers) turn up in cameos. The script, by Michael Tolkin, is adapted from his own novel.—T.R. (4/20/92) (Village East Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, and Cinema 3.)



At Film Forum 2,
"The Beast from 20,000 Fathoms"

Prelude to a Kiss—The director, Norman René, and the writer, Craig Lucas, who collaborated on the play, have mounted the movie as if it were still before the footlights. The actors—Meg Ryan and Alec Baldwin as the romantic couple, Sydney Walker as the mysterious Old Man, and even supporting performers like Stanley Tucci (Baldwin's best friend and best man)—are as emotionally weak as they are gesturally emphatic. There's no behavior here, only stage action, and it thuds on celluloid. The camera ruthlessly reveals the simultaneous thinness and clunkiness of the whimsy at the drama's core. The pivotal twist involves a soul-transference that's supposed to test the groom's vow to love his bride "all the more" when she shows the ravages of age. The concept's wispiness allows audiences to project their own agendas onto the script: the play has been perceived as an imaginative comment on everything from sexual orientation to the durability of love in the epoch of AIDS. Yet Lucas's banal language and fairy-tale sophistries oversimplify rather than enrich matters. There's no felt life on the screen. When Alec Baldwin cries, there's isn't a wet eye in the house.—M.S. (7/27/92) (Carnegie Hall Cinemas. . . . ¶ Manhattan Twin. Evenings only.)

Raising Cain—With John Lithgow, Lolita Davidovich, Steven Bauer, Frances Sternhagen, Gregg Henry, Tom Bower, and Mel Harris; directed by Brian De Palma. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Murray Hill Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, Metro Cinema, and National Twin.)

Single White Female—With Bridget Fonda and Jennifer Jason Leigh, directed by Barbet Schroeder. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Village Theatre VII, Bay Cinema, Beekman, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and National Twin.)

Sister Act—Whoopi Goldberg stars as a Reno lounge singer on the lam from her murderous mobster ex-lover (Harvey Keitel). Disguised as a nun in a San Francisco convent, she manages to bring new music into the choir, fresh street faces into the pews, and a social-activist spirit into the revitalized congregation. The plot and the characters are almost insultingly perfunctory (the pseudonymous Joseph Howard is credited with the script), and when there isn't any rock on the soundtrack the moviemaking is listless. Still, the director, Emile Ardolino, who made "Dirty Dancing," knows how to use sixties hits for an over-all bounce that jumps audiences past dead patches. Goldberg maintains her gruff tone, which helps keep the film from stagnating with sappiness. If Maggie Smith glowers ineffectually as the Mother Superior, a couple of actresses—Kathy Najimy and Mary Wickes—imbue their nun roles with the euphoria of inspired farceurs. (Najimy defines "overjoyed.") The film isn't a divine comedy, and it's not satisfyingly profane either. But it generates a few laughs. It's got a good beat, and you can dance to it.—M.S. (6/15/92) (Village East Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, Worldwide Cinemas. . . . ¶ Olympia; through Aug. 20, evenings only.)

A Special Day (1977)—A schematic romance that takes place in Rome on May 8, 1938, during Hitler's visit with Mussolini. Sophia Loren, without visible cosmetics, wears a drab housedress. But with your husband as the producer and Pasqualino De Santis as the lighting cameraman, who needs makeup and fancy clothes? She has never looked more richly beautiful or given such a completely controlled great-lady performance. This movie is perfectly calibrated for its teeny bit of courage: the big stars playing uncharacteristic roles. She's an oppressed working-class housewife, the mother of six children, and Marcello Mastroianni is a suspected homosexual who has just been dismissed as a radio announcer and is about to be interned in Sardinia. Their humiliation draws them together for a few hours, and we see that society has wronged them, cruelly. It's neo-realism in a gold frame. This strenuous exercise in sensitivity was directed by Ettore Scola in a style that might be called genteel shamelessness—the brief-encounter turf so well tended by Noël Coward when he was being "real." There's one miscalculation, though: when Mastroianni is in bed with Loren, he lies there politely, as she puts his hand on her magnificent melon breast. And how can you have any feeling for a man who doesn't enjoy being in bed with Sophia Loren? You lose any interest in the radio announcer; he just fades away. In Italian.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Aug. 24-25.)

A Stranger Among Us—At least there's the kick of hearing piping-voiced Melanie Griffith refer to the Cabala as "that Jewish Kama Sutra." Griffith plays a New York cop who goes undercover in the Hasidic community to investigate a murder. She moves into the household of the Rebbe (Lee Richardson), befriends his adopted daughter (Mia Sara), and comes on to his adopted son (Eric Thal). Apart from deflecting the proposals of her hospitalized boyfriend-partner (Jamey Sheridan) and the propositions of her aggressive replacement partner (John Pankow), she doesn't do much; detective work hardly enters into Robert J. Avrech's script. There aren't even any red herrings—certainly not kosher ones, since the filmmakers share the Hasidim's view of their community as a peaceable kingdom. The director, Sidney Lumet, abetted by the cinematographer, Andrzej Bartkowiak, relentlessly aestheticizes the world of his fathers. Griffith's artless embodiment of the script's deranged idea of tough-gal gumption isn't as amusing as it should be. She's a B-picture heroine stuck in an absurdly self-conscious prestige project.—M.S. (7/27/92) (Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema I, and Columbus Circle. . . . ¶ 86th Street East Twin, and 23rd St. West Triplex; through Aug. 20, evenings only.)

They Knew What They Wanted (1940)—The Sidney Howard play (it's the source of the musical "The Most Happy Fella") was highly regarded in 1924, and Hollywood was drawn to this adulterous drama of the San Francisco waitress who agrees to marry Tony Patucci, an Italian grape grower in the Napa Valley, and then, in spite of herself, is seduced by the bridegroom's hired man. It was

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filmed in 1928 with Pola Negri and in 1930 with Vilma Banky. In this version, Carole Lombard sucks in her gorgeous cheeks and tries to look as if she's desperate to escape a life of poverty and drudgery; while Charles Laughton, as the goodhearted Tony, wears overalls and a droopy mustache, waves his arms ebulliently, and laughs with so much Latin gusto that even Anthony Quinn might be stunned. Lombard and Laughton work at their roles seriously, but who wants to see her in dowdy clothes thinking thoughts, and who wants to see him being earthy and simple and wise? (He has some ingenious moments but his "ethnic" acting isn't remotely Italian-American—at times, he might be playing Charlie Chan.) Directed by Garson Kanin, from Robert Ardrey's adaptation; edited by John Sturges. With William Gargan as the hired hand, Harry Carey as the virtuous Doc, and Frank Fay, in one of the least convincing performances of all time, as a pure-hearted padre. Everybody involved seems to be working against the grain. The picture, which is permeated with spiritual sentiments of the tackiest variety, is like a fake antique.—P.K. (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 25.)

Unforgiven—Set in eighteen-eighties Kansas and Wyoming, this engrossing, moody Western is the sixteenth film Clint Eastwood has directed, and by far the best. The canny script, by David Webb Peoples, revives the old story about the retired gunfighter (Eastwood) who picks up his firearms again for one last score. But there's no easy resolution, and the movie is stronger because of its loose ends: the filmmakers acknowledge that the bloody chaos of an outlaw's life can't be settled in two hours and eleven minutes. The action begins when a cowboy slashes the face of a prostitute, and her co-workers pool their money to offer a reward for the murder of him and his partner. Jaimz Woolvett is the upstart who enlists Eastwood in the bounty hunt. Morgan Freeman plays Eastwood's long-time partner, Gene Hackman a megalomaniac sheriff, Richard Harris a flamboyant English gunslinger, and Saul Rubinek a dime novelist. This is the finest set of performances ever to grace a Clint Eastwood movie, and this time Eastwood even does a good job directing Eastwood. Every bullet in this movie matters; under its leathery hide is a genuine compulsion to de-romanticize Western gunfighting.—M.S. (8/10/92) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Unlawful Entry—Madeleine Stowe and Kurt Russell play an upwardly mobile L.A. couple; Ray Liotta is the cop who thinks he's a better man for Stowe. For about ten minutes, the movie is an effective exploitation of atavistic male pride, with class warfare mixed in. But it swiftly degenerates into another cat-and-mice thriller—and this time both the cat and, fatally, the audience are much smarter than the mice. The film is short on observation and long on jeopardy. It's what TV executives call "a Jep movie," except that in TV Jep movies the victimized woman gets to avenge herself. Here she needs the protection of her husband. Jonathan Kaplan directed the script by Lewis Colick.—M.S. (7/13/92) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex; through Aug. 20. . . . ¶ 23rd St. West Triplex, and Worldwide Cinemas; through Aug. 20, evenings only. . . . ¶ Gotham Cinema; through Aug. 25.)

A Wedding (1978)—Robert Altman's satirical farce takes place during a single day, starting with a family-only Episcopal-church wedding and then moving from the church to the reception at the groom's family mansion, in a North Shore suburb of Chicago. It's as if Altman has set out to prove that those who couldn't see the innovative greatness of his earlier films were right; it seems to have been made by an Altman imitator. The forty-eight members of the cast (especially Carol Burnett, Pat McCormick, and Amy Stryker) do many charming things, but the flimsy movie is bitter in a concealed, dry, facile way; at the end, the characters seem to have been chopped up by a pixieish yet rancorous comedian.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; Aug. 22.)

Whispers in the Dark—With Annabella Sciorra, Jamey Sheridan, Anthony LaPaglia, Jill Clayburgh, John Leguizamo, Deborah Unger, and Alan Alda; directed by Christopher Crowe. (Reviewed in this issue.) (19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Art Greenwich Twin, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy.)

Zou Zou (1934)—Starring Josephine Baker. The pseudo-biographical plot casts her as a Creole laundress who becomes a music-hall star. Baker wasn't actually a washerwoman's daughter, as was widely believed, or a Creole, but she did play Offenbach's "La Créole," later that year. She had left America in 1925, a maniacally gifted chorus girl and a clown. In Paris, she became the magnificent Ebony Venus. But Baker never stopped being a clown, and she danced voraciously, eating up space and using every bit of her long, elegant, antic body—and her eyes and her fingers. She also sang, in a voice that Vernon Duke described as "a small but quite exquisite coloratura soprano." Her big number here, "C'est Lui," remained one of her signature songs. Jean Gabin sings, too, though the racial prejudices of the time cast him as her adopted brother rather than as her lover. Marc Allégret directed. In French.—A.C. (Walter Reade Theatre; Aug. 20.)

Probably the flukiest horror smash ever made is the 1931 "Dracula" (playing August 21-22, at Film Forum 2), Tod Browning's ragged, stilted screen version of the Hamilton Deane–John Balderston play. Lacking both the clammy obsessiveness of Bram Stoker's 1897 novel and the inspired visual ghastliness of F. W. Murnau's pirated silent adaptation ("Nosferatu"), Browning's movie nonetheless became a popular sensation as the first big horror talkie. It still gets by on the transfixing pull of its vampire legend, a handful of genuinely spooky images, Dwight Frye's mad-eyed foolishness as the Count's insect-chomping aide, and, especially, the freakish magnetism of Bela Lugosi's lead performance. Lugosi behaves like a cross between a mesmerist and a headwaiter in a Hungarian restaurant. With his super-deliberate delivery, his ultra-formal bearing, and his imposing brow, he carries the weight of every lighting effect that Browning and the sometimes great cinematographer Karl Freund throw at him.

Almost all the shocks come in the opening twenty minutes, at Dracula's Transylvanian castle. Browning and Freund evoke the sickly allure of the vampire's three spectral wives, and there are several engaging, perverse touches, such as a bug emerging from its own mini-coffin and armadillos skittering among the castle's ruins. When Dracula moves to England, he sinks his fangs into Frances Dade's curious Lucy and Helen Chandler's demure Mina before the vampire hunter Van Helsing (Edward Van Sloan) retaliates with wolfsbane, crucifixes, and a wooden stake.

The moviemakers succumb to the drawing-room conventions of the play. Browning presents the ingredients of Stoker's witches' brew in their most rudimentary form. But, in this case, familiarity breeds affection. Revival audiences are apt to talk along with Lugosi's signature lines, like "I never drink—wine." It was never a chilling horror film, but "Dracula" has turned into an indestructible midnight movie.

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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

Notes and Comment

As it happens, some of the most interesting, if least publicized, confessions of this campaign year have come not from the candidates but from television journalists—specifically, Dan Rather, Tom Brokaw, Peter Jennings, Jim Lehrer, and Bernard Shaw, the anchors of the major national evening newscasts. You wouldn't know it from watching their broadcasts, but these men apparently feel considerable remorse over the job that they and their colleagues have done in covering the Presidential contest. The five anchors recounted their journalistic shortcomings at a panel discussion in New York last month, which was sponsored by Harvard's Fran Shorenstein Barone Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy. They lamented their tendency to emphasize so-called horse-race questions, focussing on which candidate was ahead, rather than to offer substantive analyses of what the candidates stood for, and they admitted that their coverage too often favored the superficial and sensational over the important and enlightening. "It hit me in New Hampshire when I realized that the press only cared about Gennifer Flowers and the people only cared about the economy," Mr. Jennings said. Mr. Brokaw said that the media had engaged in "voyeurism for the sake of voyeurism," and Mr. Lehrer said, "We're in really serious trouble. I think we're losing our credibility." The only unrepentant note was struck by Mr. Shaw, the CNN anchor, whose conception of political reporting seems not to have changed since 1988, when he opened the final debate between George Bush and Michael Dukakis by sternly demanding to know what each candidate would do if his wife were "raped and murdered." The media were "duty bound" to report the tabloid allegations against Clinton, Mr. Shaw said now, and he added that if American voters were underinformed it was their own fault as much as it was television's.

This particular discussion didn't get much publicity (there were brief, buried stories in the Los Angeles *Times* and the Washington *Post*, and mentions on two C-Span broadcasts), but such mea culpas are becoming almost a quadrennial ritual within the news business. Every time the country holds an election, it seems, journalists end up apologizing for not living up to the promises they made four years earlier to do a better job next time. In 1984, for example, the media, and especially the television networks, happily went along with carefully orchestrated Reagan White House propaganda that passed off empty one-liners as genuine news events. Then, late in Reagan's Presidency, when his aura of invincibility unravelled amid disclosures of the Iran-Contra affair, some journalists began to criticize their previous gullibility and vowed not to be taken in so easily during the campaign to elect Reagan's successor. Yet the coverage of the 1988 campaign, with its emphasis on Willie Horton, flag factories, and other phony symbols, was, if anything, even emptier. In May, 1989, the *Times* published an article reporting that "some television journalists . . . believe that they bear part of the responsibility for the intellectual vacuity of the 1988 campaign." The headline asked "Will the Networks Succeed in Getting the Candidates to Talk Substance in 1992?" and the article noted that key ABC News officials had begun meeting just weeks after the 1988 election to discuss, in the words of Peter Jennings, "how to deal with the fact that politicians and political consultants have learned so well how to manipulate us." Tim Russert, a vice-president of NBC News, was quoted as saying that in 1992 "you'll see a lot of movement in the direction of network selectivity in what they cover." Yet here we are in 1992 and once again apologies are being made for coverage that has been as simpleminded as ever—and being made, this time, while the simpleminded coverage is still taking place.

The same thing happens when the country goes to war: the press submits to the government after swearing that it would never be tricked again. Whether it's the invasion of Grenada or of Panama or of the Persian Gulf makes no noticeable difference. The military invade in secret. The press is shocked to find itself not invited along. Eventually, the Pentagon softens slightly, and reporters are escorted by military officials to observe carefully selected portions of the battle area. News executives

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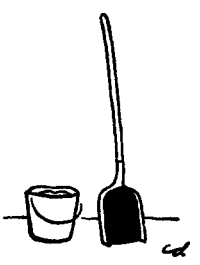
clear their throats a few times and mumble something about the First Amendment, but they accept the arrangement. After the fighting is over and the President's poll numbers have soared, less flattering parts of the war story begin to leak out. Journalists express shame and chagrin, and vow never to betray their profession's ethics again. The military half-apologize for getting carried away in the heat of battle, and a commission of news executives and military officers is set up to insure free and responsible coverage of the next war. Along comes the next war, and the military once again invade in secret.

In a new book about media coverage of the Gulf War, John MacArthur says that Dan Rather told him that the Gulf War coverage "fits into a general trend of American journalism over the last five to ten years that you can see in the coverage of political campaigns, in the coverage of domestic issues such as race and the economy"—that "it is: Just get in the middle and move with the mass; don't cause any trouble; don't ask any tough questions; don't take the risk." Rather added, "To change the atmosphere is the challenge," but said he did not know how to do that. Nor were any answers forthcoming during the panel discussion with Rather and his fellow-anchors. "Here were five of the most powerful men in America, and they were acting as if they had no power to change what was going on in their own newsrooms," Howard Kurtz, who covered the event for the Washington *Post*, marvelled. Yet the anchors may not have been ducking responsibility so much as being realistic about the system they are a part of. They, of all people, recognize that money is at the root of virtually all decisions in television news these days; it goes without saying that newscasts must enhance a company's competitiveness and profitability or they will not stay on the air. (Some of the same pressures confront the nominally non-commercial Public Broadcasting System, which is becoming increasingly reliant on big corporate sponsors.) Rather hinted at these constraints when he explained during the panel discussion that the reason the networks had not devoted more time to investigating campaign issues was a fear that "being serious but dull" would damage ratings.



The anchors' resigned acceptance of the status quo amounts to a confession that, for all their star power, multi-million-dollar salaries, and, in the cases of Rather and Brokaw, formal status as managing editors of their broadcasts, they feel no freer to ignore corporate imperatives than the average assembly-line worker does. But the networks may be underestimating their audience: there is more than a little evidence—some of it from the ratings themselves—that viewers are as unhappy with shallow coverage as the anchors are. They're turning to other sources for their news—phone-in interviews with the candidates, C-Span, and so on—and it will take more than confessions to get them back.

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Independents

Ted Kaminsky is a strapping young man with long dark hair, an excitable index finger, and some strongly held convictions, which he uses the finger to drive home. On a recent weekend afternoon, he was in town to tell New Yorkers that Ross Perot had *never* dropped out of the race, *no way;* Perot had only said he was going to stop campaigning. For some reason, a lot of people are apparently not open to this message, and that afternoon many of them happened to be hanging out in the Village within spitting distance of the spot, on Bleecker Street, where Mr. Kaminsky was standing—right beside a table where you could put your name and address on a petition to place Mr. Perot's name on the New York State ballot. *Sir!* Sign a petition for Ross Perot? How about *you*, Ma'am? Mr. Kaminsky just couldn't understand why the people weren't all breaking their necks to sign.

Suddenly, Mr. Kaminsky bent over to rummage in a bag. When he stood up, we noticed that he had stripped off his T-shirt—a plain white one.

Michael Zumbluskas, a Perot volunteer standing behind the table, said, "Ted, what are you doing?"

Mr. Kaminsky slipped into a garment that bore the words "Rush Tour 1991," and said, "I'm getting into my heavy-metal shirt, so I can track the rock-and-roll crowd."

As he made his way down Bleecker, petitions in hand, we took out of our bag the flyer that had drawn us there. It read:

People for a Voting Choice
presents
"Campaign '92 Entertainment Marathon"
Six Hours of Comedy, Music, and Celebrity Guests
Voter Registration
Ross Perot Petition Signing
4 - 10 p.m.
At the Village Gate

At that point, Barbara Contardi appeared and took our elbow. Barbara is a compact, energetic woman with wavy brown hair and torrential optimism. She also seems to be on a first-name basis with the entire world. Barbara is one of the founders of People for a Voting Choice, which she describes as a group that comprises supporters of many candidates. (She used to work for Jerry Brown.) It's high on Perot because of his commitment to the idea of a third political party and to grass-roots efforts to bring more people into the democratic process, especially through voter registration.

Now, in Barbara's experience there are few things more effective for drumming up interest in a principle than the promise of a laugh. So, back in June, she decided to arrange the marathon. The up side was that a number of comics—including several celebrities—spontaneously decided to contribute their talents. The down side was that a number of comics—beginning with the celebrities—spontaneously decided, on second thought, to cancel. This had a ripple effect on the potential audience, Barbara surmised. The marathon was scheduled for that very afternoon and evening, and yet by the announced starting time nobody had shown up. "The marathon's pushed back to after six," she said. "It's such a gorgeous day anyway that we all want to be outside."

The other news wasn't entirely gloomy, either. Barbara's good friend Lynn had arrived to lend moral support. "Meet Lynn Samuels," Barbara said. It was *the* Lynn Samuels, talk-show host on WABC: the day's first celebrity. Ms. Samuels had flowing beet-red hair—half of which had been caught up in a ponytail that sprouted outward from one temple—and glasses with frames of the same color. She wore Spandex, denim, and one shoulder-duster earring, which featured a cluster of tinkling globes, and she

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spoke in the same warm, whiskey-and-honey voice she uses on the air. We noted that she was wearing a "Brown '92" pin, and asked her if she intended to sign the Perot petition.

"I'm not signing," she said.

"Look," Barbara said. "You're not going to get a perfect President."

Ms. Samuels shrugged. "I had Jerry Brown on my radio show a couple of times over the phone," she said. "At the end of one interview, I was completely unprofessional and I said, 'Jerry Brown, I love you.'"

Barbara steered a blond woman over and introduced her as Dyan Dorle. "This is a good story," she said. "She's a Perot volunteer, and she knows Yoko Ono."

• •

Ms. Dorle said, "What I say is: If I could get Yoko to sign the Perot petition and get a photo of her doing it, nobody would print it." She smiled.

"Sign a Perot petition!" Mr. Zumbluskas was saying loudly. "Let's put pressure on the Democrats and Republicans."

A passerby approached the Perot table. She wore a pin with a cartoon version of Edvard Munch's "The Shriek" and, over it, the words "President Quayle."

"I'll sign," she said to Mr. Zumbluskas. "Why not?"

Mr. Zumbluskas studied her pin and asked, "Did you vote in the Democratic primary?"

"Yeah," she said.

He sighed, and said, "That's why not."

A table devoted to voter registration was set up near the Perot table. Taking the seat behind scores of registration forms from the Board of Elections was a woman with lively blue eyes and a winning smile. Barbara introduced her as Dolores Schneider. "She was on the Brown campaign with us," Barbara said.

"I've been politically active for twenty-five years," Ms. Schneider said. She went on, "Brown was a wonderful guy, but he couldn't make up his mind if he wanted to be a priest or President."

By six o'clock, when we went off to grab some dinner, Ms. Schneider had registered seventeen people. That may not sound like many, but it was more than had gathered in the Village Gate rathskeller for the marathon when we returned, at seven-fifteen. By ten o'clock, we'd heard a baker's-dozen standups—some working in a group called the First Amendment, most working alone. Among them, only one could be narrowly defined as a political comic. His name was Randy Credico, and during a chat after the show he clarified some things for us, such as the difference between political comedy and topical comedy. "Topical comedy is stuff out of the news," he said. "Mainstream jokes, like Jay Leno's material—a joke without a statement behind it. Political comedy makes a statement. Political comedy is not a matter of the way you attack the Democrats or the Republicans; it's an attack on the whole system—the social programs, foreign policy. I don't practice it as a hoot but because it's what is in my heart." He paused, then said, "We've become a nation of court jesters, fiddling while the country goes down. You must remember that Mark Twain was a teacher; Will Rogers was a teacher."

We left the rathskeller with Mr. Credico. On the street, Mr. Zumbluskas was still going strong, and so was Mr. Kaminsky, who had rejoined him. Barbara ran up to us with some interim stats. (By the end of the night, Ms. Schneider had collected five hundred registrations, and sixty-five people had signed for Perot.) Suddenly, Mr. Credico became embroiled in a shouting match with a well-dressed woman. She turned out to be Alice Heyman, the person spearheading the Perot-petition drive.

"He's out of the race!" Mr. Credico exclaimed.

"He's *not* out of the race," Ms. Heyman replied. "You could be wrong."

A pedestrian in a torn pink T-shirt stopped in his tracks and came over to them and said, "Excuse me, man, I'm homeless. Could you give me something to eat?"

Mr. Credico and Ms. Heyman glowered at the interruption. Barbara, however, seemed quite pleased. "Good!" she said decisively. "Good material!"

Passing Through

A YOUNG woman we know writes: Last Friday, my friend Chris and I drove from Milwaukee up and across Wisconsin on our way to visit my brother, in Minneapolis. About an hour into the trip, at around noon, dark clouds broke overhead, and until late afternoon a heavy, steady rain encased our car. Finally, the sky cleared to a dull haze. It felt a little like reëntry—as if we were coming back

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into the earth's atmosphere—and we rolled down the windows to take deep breaths of fresh, damp country air. We pulled off the highway at the next rest stop and found about twenty people lining the ramp—kids, grownups, and old folks, all with expectant faces. Many were wearing windbreakers, red or powder blue, and some were holding hand-lettered signs: "Hello Bill and Al," "We ♥ Clinton and Gore," "Helmet Laws Suck!" A tall, bald county deputy in full khaki waved us into one of the last spots at the edge of the lot. After we parked, we walked over and asked him what was going on.

"Clinton and Gore are coming through," he said.

"Clinton and Gore? Who are they?" Chris asked, as though they were a band she'd never heard of.

He stopped directing traffic and turned to look at her straight on. "Our Democratic Presidential candidate and his running mate," he said, a note of annoyance in his voice.

Chris furrowed her brow and shook her head, pretending she was really stumped.

"She's just kidding," I blurted out.

"That's a relief," the deputy said.

Chris asked him if he'd vote for Clinton. He seemed momentarily taken aback by her question, as if he were a firm believer in closed-curtain balloting, but then he said, choosing his words carefully, "A month ago, I would have said no, but now I'm not so sure. I guess I'm what you call one of those disillusioned Republicans."

"Does that mean you'd have voted for Perot?" I asked.

"No way," he said. "I could tell he was a turkey from a mile off."

I asked what was planned for Clinton's visit, and the deputy shrugged. "I don't know. I suppose he'll go to the can, like anybody else."

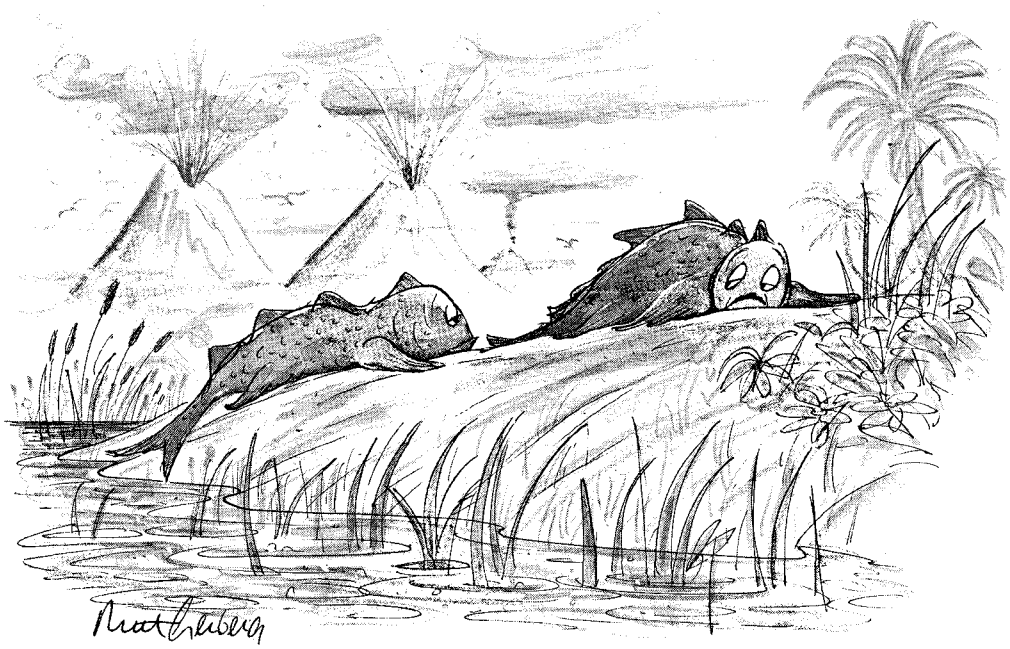
We said goodbye and headed into the rest-stop pavilion, where a you-are-here arrow on a state map pointed to Menomonie—a tiny dot about forty miles east of the Minnesota border. We visited the can, and found a group of women in front of the mirror, pressing their hairdos back into place and complaining about the humidity. A woman in a full-skirted red dress tied and retied a blue-and-white striped ribbon around her ponytail. The giddiness—and the beige walls—reminded me of the girls' room at my high school before a big dance. Chris and I decided that we, too, should spruce up for the man who might be the next President. We put on lipstick and tucked in our T-shirts.

In front of the pavilion, a small flatbed truck decorated with a few red, white, and blue balloons was parked, presumably to serve as a stage for the candidates. About a hundred people were waiting now. A few were hawking buttons and bumper stickers. A sober-looking white-haired woman sitting on a bench was gripping the pole of a tightly furled flag—probably the kind of person who wouldn't open a bag of popcorn before the movie starts. Three kids played on the lawn nearby, squirting each other with Super Soakers. I overheard a middle-aged man with an enormous belly tell a group of women a dirty joke about the Avon lady, which made them all laugh.

Chris asked a young woman holding a little girl's hand if she'd heard any news about when Clinton was supposed to arrive. "He's always late for these things," the woman said, playing it cool, as though Clinton's passing through Menomonie were a routine thing.

A few minutes later, a state trooper wearing a navy Stetson climbed up on the back of the truck. "Well, I've just got a report on the radio!" he called through a megaphone. "I guess you'd all like to hear the status of the motorcade, and that is that it still hasn't left Chippewa Falls." A few people in the crowd groaned. "That might put Clinton and Gore here in another hour or so—maybe five, five-thirty. I know you've all been patient, but if you could just hold on a bit longer I'm sure Bill Clinton will be awful glad to see you."

Chris and I looked at each other and grimaced—my brother was expecting us in Minneapolis, and we knew we had to go. But we were surprised at how much we wanted to be there at the wayside when the bus rolled in. An old man standing at the edge of the crowd was looking east down I-94 toward Chippewa Falls. He was holding a sign in front of his chest: "Give Us Five Minutes, and We'll Give You Eight Years."



"Gee, evolution is slow."

Missing the Ball

Bill Buckner and Keith Olbermann have at least one thing in common: both men let the same baseball get through their legs. It eluded Buckner first, in the tenth inning of Game Six of the 1986 World Series, in which he played first base for the Boston Red Sox. Scooting off the bat of New York Met Mookie Wilson, the ball dodged Buckner's glove and bounced past him, allowing the Mets to win the game and, eventually, the championship. After that play, the ball continued to travel. It went from the pocket of Ed Montague, the right-field umpire, to the Mets clubhouse, then

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to the home of Arthur Richman, a former Mets official who's now a Yankee vice-president, then to Leland's auction house, in Manhattan, then down to Miami, to Mookie Wilson's house, for verification (Mookie, who had previously inscribed the ball for Mr. Richman, recognized his own signature, and a tobacco stain on it as well), then back up to New York, where, the other Tuesday, it blew by Keith Olbermann. Mr. Olbermann, who was bidding on some sports souvenirs at an auction held in the Southgate Tower Suite Hotel, saw the value of the ball rising like a rocket. As it approached Buckner, six years ago, it was worth no more than a few dollars, but by the time it shot past Mr. Olbermann it was up to fifty thousand. The rise didn't stop until the actor Charlie Sheen hauled the ball in, at ninety-four thousand. Bill Buckner, however, now says that he picked the ball up immediately after his error and took it home, and if he's right, then the ball in Sheen's possession is a historical hoax on the order of the Piltdown man.

REQUIEM FOR A LIGHTWEIGHT

After the news of Mr. Sheen's purchase died down—it was reported with the astonishment due a U.F.O. sighting—we called Mr. Olbermann to try to find out how the significance of an event, even a World Series event, can leave such an imprint on something like a baseball; we also wanted to know how anyone can be sure that Sheen's ball isn't a phony. Mr. Olbermann is an anchor for ESPN sports—he's in and out of meetings, and on and off the air—so we spent much of the next few days listening to his answering machine. "This is Keith Olbermann," it kept saying. "And you've just lost another round in the game of phone tag and you have now been sentenced to the purgatory of voice mail. . . . This is Keith Olbermann rounding third and being thrown out at home."

By the time Mr. Olbermann returned our call, late in the week, we felt that we already knew him fairly well, and didn't hesitate to ask how he could be sure that Buckner had the story wrong. "Every step of the ball's journey is well documented," he said. "Mookie picked out the tobacco stain on the ball as if he were looking at his old house."

Even if the ball was genuine, we asked, what about it could possibly justify spending so much money for it?

"When the ball passed through Buckner's legs, when Buckner turned to watch the ball recede from view, it was a signal instant in the history of the game," Mr. Olbermann said. "The most significant instant since Roger Maris broke Babe Ruth's record with his sixty-first home run. The ball changed the course of a very big thing, and that's why it's so important that this is indeed the same ball."

Mr. Olbermann ordinarily speaks in rolling tones, as if he were forever on the verge of a record-breaking moment, but discussing Bill Buckner put him in a relatively philosophical mood. "All kinds of meanings are lurking around inside that ball," he said. "A hero's a great thing, but a tortured hero's transcendent. That's why the ball is so loved—not because the Mets won the Series but because it took the hero through the wringer and now holds the secret of failure. By bidding on it, I suppose, I was inquiring into the mystery of loss." He cleared his throat, and added, "If my bid had won, I planned to rent a storefront in Boston, hire a couple of armed guards, and put the ball in a glass case. Red Sox fans in sackcloth and ashes would wander into the store, kneel before the case, and beg the spirit of the ball to let go—to let go of every Red Sox fan, and, for that matter, to let go of us all."

Later, we phoned Joshua Leland Evans, the founder of the auction house that sold the ball. Mr. Evans said that he has no patience when it comes to Bill Buckner's assertions. "Anyone who looks at the ball can tell that it's genuine—that it's no ordinary thing," he said. "Besides the signature, there's the tobacco stain—like a patina—and I envision Lenny Dykstra, then the Mets center fielder, in the clubhouse after the game, his big old chaw-filled cheek jutting out, bending over to kiss the ball and slobbering all over it. That ball's a beautiful thing. It's shaded brown and looks like it's really been places. The grass stains on it seem to glow. And now it's a celebrity in its own right, famous for being famous, noted for drawing big money and the attention of movie stars. No amount of accusation will take that away. This ball has changed a lot since the ump pulled it from the equipment bag six years ago. If you want to know if it's genuine, just look at the thing."

Mr. Olbermann has another solution. "Try to pick it up," he says. "If it falls from your hands and rolls between your legs, you've got your Buckner ball."

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ARCHEOLOGY

THE sun had already warmed the trailer. I opened the metal locker where the workmen usually put their clothes, and took out two paintbrushes, a scraper, and a bundle of paper bags. I was thirsty. There was nothing to drink, but on the table there were a few apples, which the construction foreman, Vítek, had brought from his garden. I slipped one into my pocket, took a bite of another, and stepped out of the trailer with my small load. I hid the key behind one of the rear wheels—exactly the same place where they hide the key from potential burglars in every trailer I've ever known; then I followed the path that wound among puddles from the recent rains and piles of excavated earth. From here you could see a spruce wood on the opposite hillside, and practically all of the construction site, but not the burial ground. The metal shells of future buildings were radiating heat, and I was suddenly aware that the construction site, where at least a hundred people were supposed to be working, was silent—more silent than the ancient burial ground, where there were never more than five of us digging at any one time.

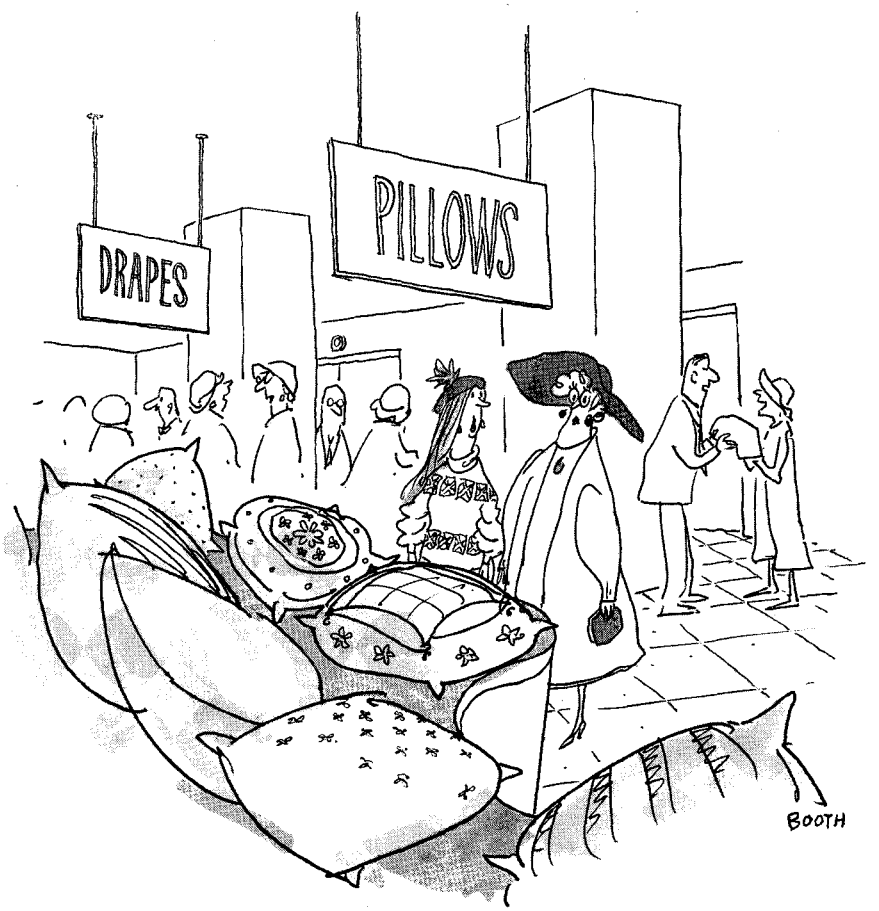
Earlier in 1984, a building crew excavating near Pilsen, in western Czechoslovakia, had turned up signs of a prehistoric cemetery. I'd taken to driving over from Prague now and again to help the archeologists at the site. I had no particular feelings one way or the other about archeology; it certainly wasn't one of my hobbies. In high school, one of my classmates had longed to be an archeologist. We were close friends for a while, and he would drag me around the old Celtic settlements near Prague. He even persuaded me to carry a small pick and trowel in my rucksack. Every so often we would dig a scrap of baked clay out of the ground, and my friend would lecture me excitedly on the people who had made it. Thanks to his enthusiasm, I knew at least something about the funnel-shaped-cup culture, the globular-amphora culture and the scroll culture, the Řivná and Únětice cultures, and the people who made braided ceramics. But my friend was not allowed to study archeology. His parents had owned a small private laundry before the Communist takeover, and back in the fifties the authorities still took a dim view of such people. Over the years, I had managed to forget almost everything he'd told me about ancient potters and Celtic settlements. All that remained in my memory now, three decades later, was the poetic associations in the names of those ancient cultures.

History, on the other hand, has always interested me, and the mystery of where man first came from—where he made his first appearance on the earth in general, and in particular in Bohemia, where I live.

The path led me alongside the portable dormitories used by the construction workers. From here you could see the burial ground and the people who were working there: Lída, the archeologist who was guiding our molelike labors; Petra, her assistant from the museum; and the volunteer, Masha, who at that moment was wheeling away a barrow full of earth. She was the only person moving on the entire construction site.

In the portable changing room there was running water. I squeezed between chaotic piles of scrap metal and lumber and past a table piled with yesterday's unwashed thermoses, filthy plates, and utensils caked with old food. I found a half-empty glass of beer with a drowned wasp floating in it, poured the contents on the floor, and stepped into the washroom. What emerged from the tap looked like a mixture of water and blood. Only one of the three sinks worked, and it was filthy, as if no one had cleaned it in the two years the construction had been going on. It was covered with a layer of rust and slimy grease. I rinsed the glass as thoroughly as I could and filled it with water.

We don't know a lot about the Celts who once lived in our country; that much I learned from my high-school classmate. They left no written records. Caesar, who fought the Celts for many years, tells us that the Celtic priests—the Druids—considered it a sin to set down anything of their lore in written form. What we know about them was passed on to us by others, by foreigners or enemies, like Caesar, who also tells us what is so often said of the Celts: that they were a deeply religious people who believed in the transmigration of souls after death, and who



"You know your dog better than I do."

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worshipped their gods with human sacrifices. *Omnis natio Gallorum est admodum dedita religionibus . . . aut immolant homines pro victimis, aut vovent se immolaturos. . . .* But I would hate to think that the main written evidence about our own lives might come from the notebooks kept by the commander-in-chief of an invading army.

Historians prefer the testimony of archeologists. Unfortunately, archeologists derive most of what they know of the Celts from graves. I am skeptical of the notion that we can learn much about life from graves, though I admit that the way we bury our dead today says a lot about how relationships among the living have deteriorated.

Long before Caesar came across the Celtic religion in its Druidic form, the Celts worshipped their heroes and the forces of nature, above all the goddess Mother Earth. Everything that surrounded the Celts was an expression of spirits, whose voices they tried to hear and understand.

I'd love to know what those voices sounded like. Did they sound like the howling of the wind? Like birdsong? Like the buzzing of bees? Were they like the clang of metal, as might have suited that Age of Bronze? Or did they come to man as barely visible or audible vibrations, filling him with anxiety, love, and portents—and do they sound essentially the same today?

"His first fax."

• •

"DID you find everything?" Lída, our boss, put down the scraper she was using to remove a thin layer of dirt from the grave. She was young, although her hair was prematurely gray, befitting her dignified bearing and her position.

I handed her the instruments; she gave me her customary smile, immediately divided the bundle of paper bags in half, and handed one lot to Petra, who began putting lumps of clay into them. The lumps were lightly veined with tiny fragments of human bone.

"Wonderful old fellows, aren't they?" Petra said.

"That's all you've found?" I asked, making conversation.

"That's about it. A few bits of carbon. It's not going to be a good day. Just like this whole week. I had a feeling it would be this way when I got up this morning." Petra looked like the Greek women in the Pylos frescoes: narrow waist and large breasts, black eyebrows that almost met over her nose, and almond eyes. "Once, last week, as soon as I saw Lída by the bus, I told her, 'Today we're uncovering a treasure.' "

Last Monday, at the edge of the uncovered part of the burial ground, they had unearthed a bronze needle, a buckle, and part of a hollow tube that looked more like a bronze syringe than anything else. They couldn't say what it had been used for, and rather than trying to concoct a hypothesis that would have upset all our notions of ancient medicine—which I would have enjoyed—they wrapped everything in cotton batting, put it in a box, and we took it over to the next district where, in the middle of a wheat field, a group of pensioners was digging, under the guidance of a professor from the Academy.

On the way, Lída and Petra had talked about their discoveries while I observed the countryside, which was still covered with trackless, uninhabited forests. It was here, mostly in the upland areas, that the Celts had built their settlements. They had lived here for centuries, and their spirits lived here with them. Then they suddenly vanished. But had they really left behind them no more than these few fragments and shards we were now discovering in their graves?

The professor knew her bronzes, and she received us warmly. She showed us the grave site they'd uncovered in the field—it was swept clean of every scrap of earth—and a large vessel still embedded in the ground. Then she offered us cakes. She couldn't be sure what the little tube had been used for. "You'll have to be satisfied with having uncovered something unique," she had told Lída, who flushed with delight.

Now I went over to the site next to Petra's, took a pick, and began to dig.

Masha came back with the empty barrow. With a shovel, she carefully lifted out the clay I'd loosened, then thoroughly examined each shovelful with her eyes and her fingers.

"Masha, are you hungry?" I asked, pulling the apple out of my pocket.

"No, thanks, but that's awfully kind

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of you. It's as hot as the Sahara out here," she said, wiping the sweat from her forehead. "If only we could find something. Petra says we won't uncover a single bone today."

Masha is just seventeen. She has a wide, good-natured face; large, inquisitive eyes; and rather thick legs. Two days ago she'd ridden through the back gate of the fence surrounding the building site on a bicycle that looked cobbled together from spare parts. She stopped at the edge of the burial ground, hesitating awhile before daring to offer her services.

"If you work for us, you won't make enough to cover your gasoline," said Lída, pointing to the engineless machine.

Masha had laughed and said she was mainly concerned about getting the proper stamp in her I.D. booklet.

"But I found a bone awhile ago," she announced to me proudly now. "Just a tiny little fragment. Lída thinks it's from a skull."

"Congratulations, Masha!"

"Actually, it made me feel kind of sad."

"Why?"

"Because a person's alive, and maybe he's miserable or maybe he's happy, but as far as the Celts were concerned, it all came to the same thing, didn't it? All that's left of him is this tiny little bone—I almost missed it."

"And what about his soul?"

"Do you think he had one?"

"The Celts believed that souls migrated into new bodies."

"Do you believe that?"

"I don't suppose I do."

When I was a boy I used to worry about whether the unbelievers and pre-Christian souls would experience salvation and resurrection. The night before I drove out here I had been reading an old edition of Eusebius' "Ecclesiastical History." Sixteen hundred years ago the author had written on that very theme—about how Jesus had descended into Hell, having destroyed its gates, which for ages had been unmovable, and how on the third day he arose from among the dead, and resurrected others who had lain in the earth since ancient times. Today such questions no longer bother me. I've realized that all the things that have ever been preached over the centuries about the soul or about God, about the origins of the world or of life, are merely intimations—fragments or pieces of something so far beyond us that our proud reason, and our imagination, can only seek in vain for words or images to gather those fragments into a whole. And I am amazed to realize how much the things we consider signs of God's will or work bear the marks of human time and human dimensions. Even people I consider wise cling desperately to fragments, and convince themselves, and others, that they have the whole vessel. All my life I have been trying to come to terms with my own being and my future nonbeing. I mistrust the self-assurance of those who claim to know—even roughly—how things were and how they will be.

"Sometimes I think nothing has any meaning," Masha said, waving toward the stones that outlined our grave site. "Actually, I wrote a story about it." She blushed.

"You write stories?"

"Sometimes. Only when I get certain ideas."

"What was that story about?"

"Someone poisoned my cat a little while ago. He was a beautiful tom, really adorable. Everyone said he was the most adorable creature they'd ever seen. I decided that it must have been done by someone really vengeful."

Vítek, the foreman, was walking by the next grave; he stopped and interrupted our literary discussion with a down-to-earth question. "What color was the cat?"

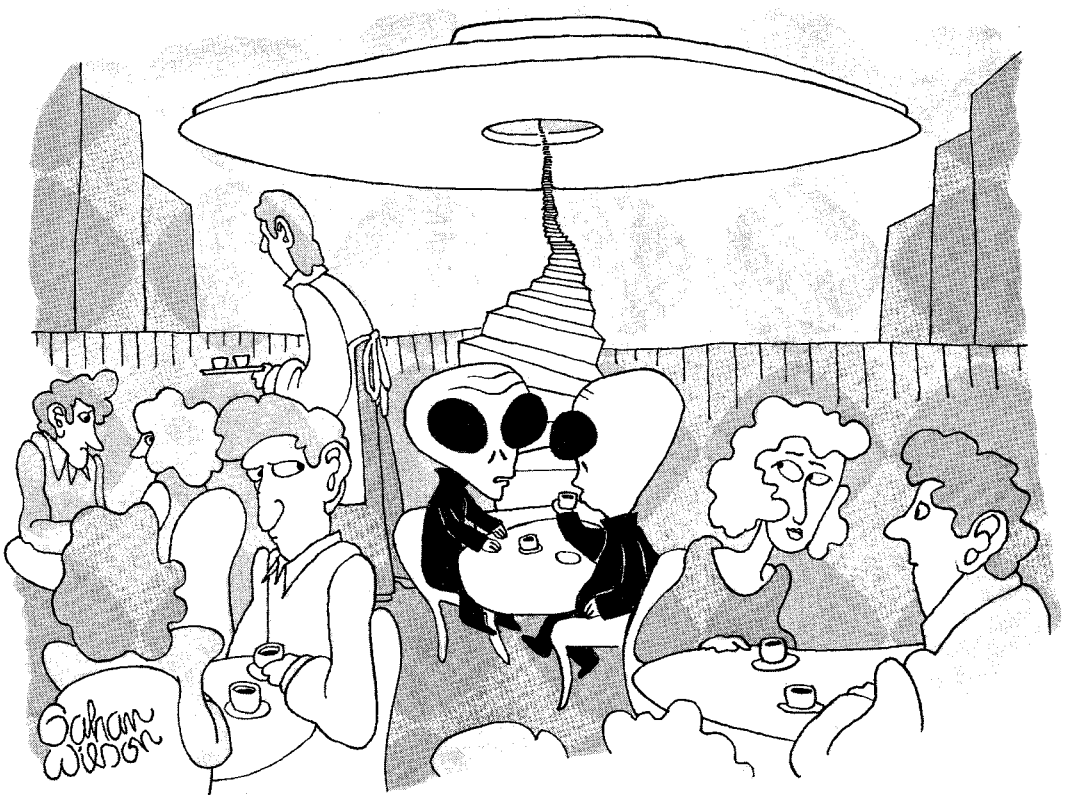
"He was a strange kind of yellowish-brown. He looked like a miniature lion."

"Do you know who killed him?"

"That's just it; I can't figure out who could have been so mean. It's like with the Vietnamese. We bring those poor people all the way over here to work for us, and no one likes them. In our town, whenever you go into a store and ask for something they don't have, the shopkeepers will tell you that the Vietnamese have cleaned them out."

"Don't talk to me about those little runts!" snapped the foreman angrily. "You should see them when they run amok. One of them here went after the section chief with a pickaxe. And it took three men to hold the bastard back!"

As though they had sensed we were talking about them, two Vietnamese laborers in



"So, how do you like cappuccino?"

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overalls approached us, with a swinging gait they had adopted from the Czech workers. They were gaunt and slight; one was half a head shorter than the other. They stopped at the edge of our grave site and observed us for a while with polite interest. Then finally one of them asked, "So, did anything you find today, Madame?"

"Nothing!" said Lída, looking up from the grave.

"Not yet a Celtic jewel, even?" asked the shorter one. His intonation was a remarkable blend of the Orient and Bohemia.

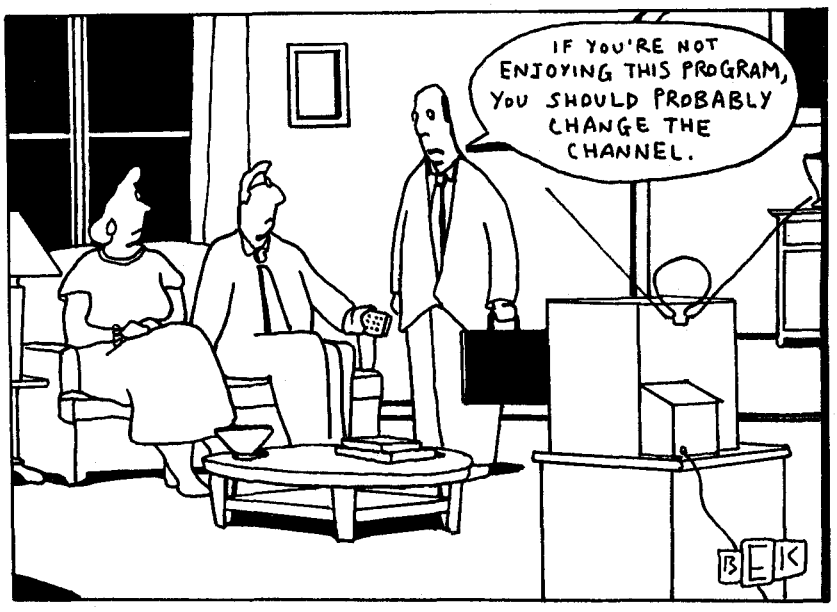
"Not a single thing," said Lída.

"It is regretful," replied the Vietnamese. "Truthfully. We were forward looking."

"Odd little buggers, aren't they?" said the foreman as soon as the Vietnamese had wandered off. "They get hammered every morning. They drink a bottle of beer for breakfast and they can't hold it—I'm afraid to send them up on the scaffolding." He took his pick and with delicate, almost tender, blows broke the hard, compacted clay.

Vítek was the one who had accidentally discovered the burial ground. Last spring, when a bulldozer was digging a trench for the building foundations, he noticed something glittering in the piles of earth. He picked it up, rinsed it in water—and found himself holding a golden earring. Not the kind they make today, but a solid, heavy thing. The foreman had not been surprised at his discovery: a Gypsy woman had predicted he'd find treasure three times in his life. Of course, she hadn't necessarily meant a treasure of precious metal. As soon as he made his discovery, Vítek took the earring to a museum, where it caused a great commotion. The trinket came from the early La Tène period, or even from the Hallstatt period. It was a magnificent example of its kind. He might have come across a whole Celtic burial ground, they said, and warned him to take a good look at everything the bulldozer turned up.

Vítek started looking carefully, but then the archeologist had arrived in the corner of the site with her assistants and some amateur enthusiasts, and they began to dig. Foreman Vítek became an enthusiastic amateur. He lived nearby, and he continued to draw his regular foreman's wages even when he was digging with us. Deep down, he was hoping to find the other earring; on top of that, he was rather fond of Petra.



THE GOLDMANS HIRE A MEDIA CONSULTANT.

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So far, no one had found the second earring, or any other trace of gold. The most likely explanation was that the Celtic goddess Nerthus, Mother Earth, had planted the earring there to stop a bulldozer from scattering the last remains of a people who had worshipped her and made sacrifices to her.

"All the same, I'm telling you," the foreman went on, "these little runts—it's the start of a whole new wave of immigration."

"Whatever do you mean by that?" asked Lída.

"They've come here from the East, haven't they? There's more of them around than dog shit on the street. A week ago in our housing project, the building inspector just O.K.'d two new apartment blocks; those people have already filled them up."

"You mustn't look at it like that," Lída objected. "They work here, after all, and they've got to live somewhere."

"And our own people are all moving west," Vítek continued, pursuing his theory. "Can you imagine what this place would be like if the borders weren't fenced off?"

"Dear God, where do you dredge up ideas like that?" said Petra at last. Vítek's diatribe had been directed chiefly at her.

"You're the one who's always telling me about how nations migrate," said Vítek in his own defense, "how these Celts suddenly disappeared."

"But that was under completely different circumstances," said Petra, and she sighed, perhaps regretting the passing of those circumstances.

THE Celts really had vanished. For centuries, they had worked on their fortified settlements, clearing the woods, grazing their herds. Some of the graves testify to their princes' wealth, but about two thousand years ago, the earth seems to have swallowed them up.

Were they wiped out by a plague? Or did they think the soil would no longer support them, and so moved west with their herds, their tools, and their clay vessels filled with grain? Or were they slaughtered or driven out by the wild warriors who lived to the north and east?

It occurred to me that if we accept the idea of a genius loci—a spirit of place that influences whoever lives in it—we might make some retrospective guesses about what happened. Perhaps one of the neighboring rulers—more powerful, or maybe just more determined, than the rest—brought his army to the very borders of this place. Perhaps he did not even have to resort to armed conquest, because the local inhabitants respected the commands of their chieftains and Druids not to provoke the enemy but rather to overwhelm him with their discipline, and

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with unexpected kindness. The conqueror might have summoned the chieftains and arrogantly demanded their submission, in exchange for which he—the invader—promised to protect their territory against invasion.

The chieftains would have weighed their options carefully before accepting subjugation and protection. Perhaps a treaty was drawn up—emphasizing that the signatories were entering voluntarily into vassalage—and signed in a grand ceremony. It wouldn't matter whether the local signatories knew how to read and write. The treaty—like all such treaties—would be binding only on the subject peoples, regardless of whether they even knew the treaty existed, let alone whether they had accepted and signed it.

We might surmise that the local people were not happy about this state of affairs. Some of them rebelled and were killed; others packed up their modest belongings and struck out for the west or the south through the nearly impenetrable forests. In those idyllic times, when free movement was hindered only by lack of roads and the only obstacles were bears or wolf packs, whole tribes could simply leave. But because we are considering the influence of what we have called a "genius loci," we ought also to assume that not all of the subject people withdrew or were slaughtered; some must have simply adapted so completely to their conquerors that no one could have told master from slave when they were alive, let alone in the grave.

And thus the Celts vanished from the places where we live today, and all that remained were burial grounds containing the ashes of their ancestors, and perhaps the gods and goddesses and spirits who had become too deeply attached to the rivers and mountains and trees and rocks.

NOTES ON THE REALITY OF THE SELF

Watching the river, each handful of it closing over the next,
brown and swollen. Oaklimbs,
gnawed at by waterfilm, lifted, relifted, lapped-at all day in
this dance of non-discovery. All things are
possible. Last year's leaves, coming unstuck from shore,
rippling suddenly again with the illusion,
and carried, twirling, suddenly shiny again and fat,
toward the quick throes of another tentative
conclusion, bobbing, circling in little suctions their stiff
presence
on the surface compels. Nothing is virtual.
The long brown throat of it sucking up from some faraway melt.
Expression pouring forth, all content no meaning.
The force of it and the thingness of it identical.
Spit forth, licked up, snapped where the force
exceeds the weight, clickings, pockets.
A long sigh through the land, an exhalation.
I let the dog loose in this stretch. Crocus
appear in the gassy dank leaves. Many
earth gases, rot gases.
I take them in, a breath at a time. I put my
breath back out
onto the scented immaterial. How the invisible
roils. I see it from here and then
I see it from here. Is there a new way of looking—
valences and little hooks—inevitabilities, proba-
bilities? It flaps and slaps. Is this body the one
I know as me? How private these words? And these? Can you
smell it, brown with little froths at the rot's lips,
meanwhiles and meanwhiles thawing then growing soggy then
the filaments where leaf-matter accrued round a
pattern, a law, slipping off, precariously, bit by bit,
sudden flicks, swiftnesses suddenly more water than not.
The nature of goodness the mind exhales.
I see myself. I am a widening angle of
and *nevertheless* and *this performance has rapidly*—
nailing each point and then each next right point, inter-
locking, correct, correct again, each rightness snapping loose,
floating, hook in the air, swirling, seed-down,
quick—*the evidence of the visual henceforth*—and henceforth, loosening—

—JORIE GRAHAM

• •

WITH a deafening roar of jet engines, a squadron of fighter planes chased each other across the sky. At that speed it was impossible to tell whether they belonged to the Celts or their conquerors. In any case, it made no difference. Masha dropped her knife and brush, looked up in alarm, and put her hands over her ears.

The beautiful Petra also stopped digging. "Yesterday we had civil-defense exercises," she said. "An officer with a lot of brass on his shoulders came and gave us a pep talk about what to do if the bomb went off. He was pretty optimistic about our prospects because—he kept assuring us—in the event of a nuclear war we'd be issued plastic coats and masks that you could put on in twenty seconds. He brought a set with him, all wrapped up, to show us how they worked. So he gazes out of the window and suddenly he shouts, 'Fire flash, south-southwest, at approximately twenty kilometres!' He grabs the parcel but he can't undo the knot. He tries to break the string but he can't do that, either. He ends up having to borrow a knife from someone, just so he can show us the protective gear. The fool has gone into a nuclear war without even taking along a penknife! And you know what he says? He says, 'Strictly speaking, comrades, I'm already dead. You see, a mere length of hempen twine can cost a man his life!' "

"He didn't really say 'strictly speaking' and 'hempen twine'?" asked Vítek.

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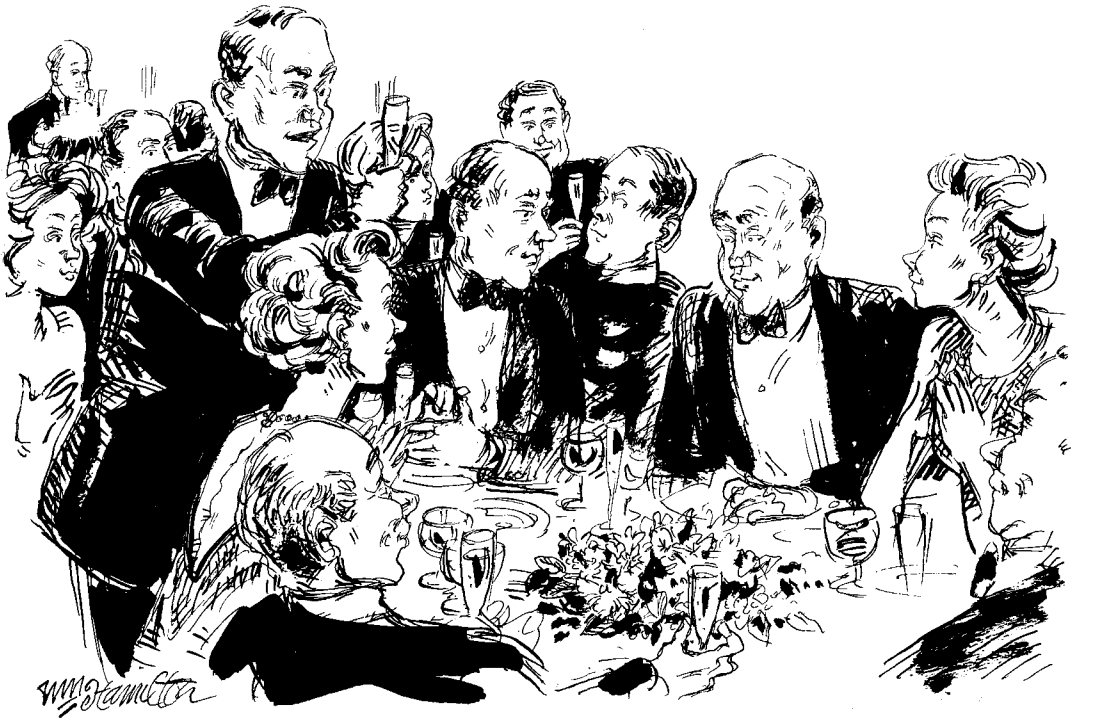
"'Strictly speaking,' 'hempen twine,'" Petra repeated. "I couldn't possibly make something like that up."

Lída stood up in her grave and wiped the sweat and dust from her forehead. "I guess it's time to photograph this now," she said, pointing to the grave that she and Petra had carefully swept clean. She pulled a camera out of a bucket and looked around for the best spot from which to immortalize the grave site. "You know who called me at five o'clock this morning?" she said, suddenly remembering. "The professor. She said our discovery had kept her awake. And then, when she finally dropped off, she dreamed about the thing." Lída turned the wheelbarrow over and got onto it. The grave in front of her was as clean as a table ready to be set, but at the same time it was bare, empty, and as hot as a patch of earth after a fire.



"In Charlie's hands wealth just never seems obscene, no matter how big it gets."

• •

"So, what was it?" asked Petra.

"She claims it was a handle."

"A handle? Who's she kidding?" said Vítek. "What did they need a handle for?"

"Maybe for a chisel," explained Lída. "Or for some special kind of knife."

"Do you think it could have been a sacrificial knife?" Masha set down the brush she had been using to clean the cracks between the rocks.

"A sacrificial knife would probably have been bigger." Lída jumped down, turned the wheelbarrow upright, pushed it over to the other side, and then climbed onto it again. "Anyway, it's difficult for anyone to say with any certainty now."

"That's awful," Masha whispered to me. "I touched that handle yesterday, too. And they might have used it to kill people with."

"The blood would have dried long ago." I reassured her.

"But what if there was a curse on the thing?"

"Do you believe in curses?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "Don't you?"

"Not really."

"Do you think they . . . Aren't they watching what we're doing here?"

"Who, the dead?"

"The ones buried here."

"Are you afraid they might take revenge on us?"

"When they dug that Tollund man out of the peat bog, one of the excavators suddenly dropped dead on the spot. I read about it. It couldn't have been just a coincidence. The man who wrote the story was there—he said that the old gods demanded a life in exchange for that ancient man."

"That sounds like a pretty human notion of what the gods expect."

"So you think there's nothing, then?"

I didn't understand her.

"I mean, you die and then—nothing?" she explained.

"There's no answer to that."

"Why not?"

"There's no answer that you can put into words."

"I know—I ask a lot of dumb questions. It drives my parents crazy."

"Words come from experience—that's what I meant to say. When we talk about something that no one has ever experienced, words can only be misleading."

"That's interesting, what you say. Does that mean you can't even write about it?" Masha got the wheelbarrow and filled it right to the brim with earth. "I'd still like to see him—the Tollund man, I mean. They say he has a beautiful head."

I trundled the wheelbarrow off to a nearby pile.

We are all waiting for some message of hope—hope for our life here, and perhaps, even more, for eternity. We want assurances that we will be exempt from the laws of nature, where everything is subject to extinction; assurances that the life in us has striven for something new, and thus that death has no dominion over us. From ancient times, people have offered bloody sacrifices, even human sacrifices, to the gods, expecting hope in return. Finally, people—or some of them anyway—found consolation in a God who accepted the sacrifice of his own son, and in return gave them hope once and for all. At the same time, other people, who had never heard of this God the Israelites worshipped—nor of his son who said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"—sacrificed one of their own people and threw his body into the Tollund bog.

The man on the cross looks down upon us in countless forms. The man

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from the Tollund Fen—his beautiful head with that magnificent high-bridged nose—was put on display in a provincial museum, a noose still around his neck. The meaning of sacrifice has been lost today; we continue to wait for some more persuasive, more logical, and more understandable prophecy. We await the news from priests, from astrologers, from political leaders, from philosophers, and from writers. And to win the favor of those who wait, there are many who will say, "Ye shall be saved!" And others cry, "There is no Heaven except on this earth, except in this life." Still others skillfully divert people's attention elsewhere, to some substitute hope. Very few have the courage to stand up and say, "My friends, there is no answer. Insofar as death can be conquered—insofar as man is truly endowed with something denied to other forms of life—it can only happen in a dimension for which we lack words." But such answers, no matter how true, would interest or satisfy no one.

"WHAT do you want to be, anyway, Masha?" I asked when I came back with the wheelbarrow.

"I wanted to study archeology. But they're probably not going to open the faculty this year, or next year, either."

"Indeed they won't," said Lída from the next grave site. "They say archeology has no practical use. It is uneconomic."

"And what draws you to archeology, if it makes you think such thoughts?" I asked Masha.

"I like the idea of finding gifts in graves. Each of those things must have been rare and special for those people, and yet they put them into the grave along with the dead. I like the idea that people used to be so fond of each other." She continued piling earth into the wheelbarrow. "When Mum and Dad got divorced," she said quietly, "they sued each other for possession of the TV and the cutlery. They couldn't have done that if they'd known how people used to . . . Archeologists have to be kinder than that; at least I can't imagine a wicked archeologist." Masha dropped her shovel and quickly covered her ears as the squadron of unidentifiable jet fighters screamed over our heads again.

"When you tell it, it's a fantastic joke," said Petra, returning to her nuclear-war story. "A mask and a coat! I saw on German television what would happen if the rockets started flying. It was such fun that I didn't have the heart to send the kids to bed. What if the whole thing just blew up that night? I'm not kidding, I had this stupid idea—let them live a little. I let them eat a whole ice-cream cake for a snack."

"Do you think it could start suddenly, just like that?" said Masha. She was clearly alarmed.

"Why not?" said Vítek. "It could start by accident."

"I've already talked things over with my husband," Petra continued. "We're going to apply to emigrate to New Zealand."

"Oh, sure, the whole country's just waiting for you to show up down there," said Vítek. He sounded as though the idea were a personal insult, as though Petra had decided to move away from *him*.

"If not New Zealand, somewhere else. It could scarcely be worse than it is here."

"Moving wouldn't be worth any more than a fart in a hurricane, Petra," said Vítek vengefully. "When those bombs start exploding, where'll you hide? Radiation will be everywhere; it'll be winter all over the world, because the sun will never make it through that cloud of ash."

"Well, what of it?" insisted Petra. "So I'll freeze somewhere. Is it better to stay here like a calf waiting to be slaughtered? Look at those fools, always putting on such a show." She pointed at the squadron of jets flying straight toward us. At that distance, they were completely silent.

Masha was furiously sweeping the grave site with a straw whisk. "What will you do if you don't get to study archeology?" I asked.

"I don't know. Maybe I could still study literature."

"Do you think there's a connection?" I said, surprised. "Or is it because you think that writers are good people, too?"

"Don't you think they're good?"

"I prefer not to make judgments about people in advance," I said.

Not long ago, a priest I know told me what one of our own chieftains, the only one who refused to sign our latest solemn treaty of vassalage and protection—with the Soviets, in 1968—had said just before he died: "You Christians are making a big mistake. You look on all people as your neighbors and you don't understand that once in a while it's the Devil you're up against."

I honor that chieftain because he rejected that ill-fated tendency to which the spirits of our place seduce us. At the same time, I would not want the human world

"You have such personality, you should really be doing something with it."

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to be reduced to angels and devils—to people who have seen truth and people who are in error, to those who are with me and those who go for my throat. Though when I think of all the things I've witnessed in my life, I really don't know why man thinks he is endowed with qualities that rank him above all other living things.

"I know a few wonderful people," I said cautiously, "and they're neither archeologists nor writers."

"As a matter of fact, there is a connection," said Masha, taking up my previous question again. "A friend of mine and I went for an outing a little way past Konstantinky. Do you know that area?"

"A little."

"And we found a fragment of something on a hilltop. They were widening the road. The piece was covered with decoration. It must have been in the ground for an enormous length of time, longer than I can imagine, and yet, all that long time ago, some person had to have made it. Someone living. Before, in school or in museums, I was never interested in archeological finds. And now suddenly I wanted to find something out about that person, especially since I lived right where he did. So I wrote a story about it." Again, she blushed.

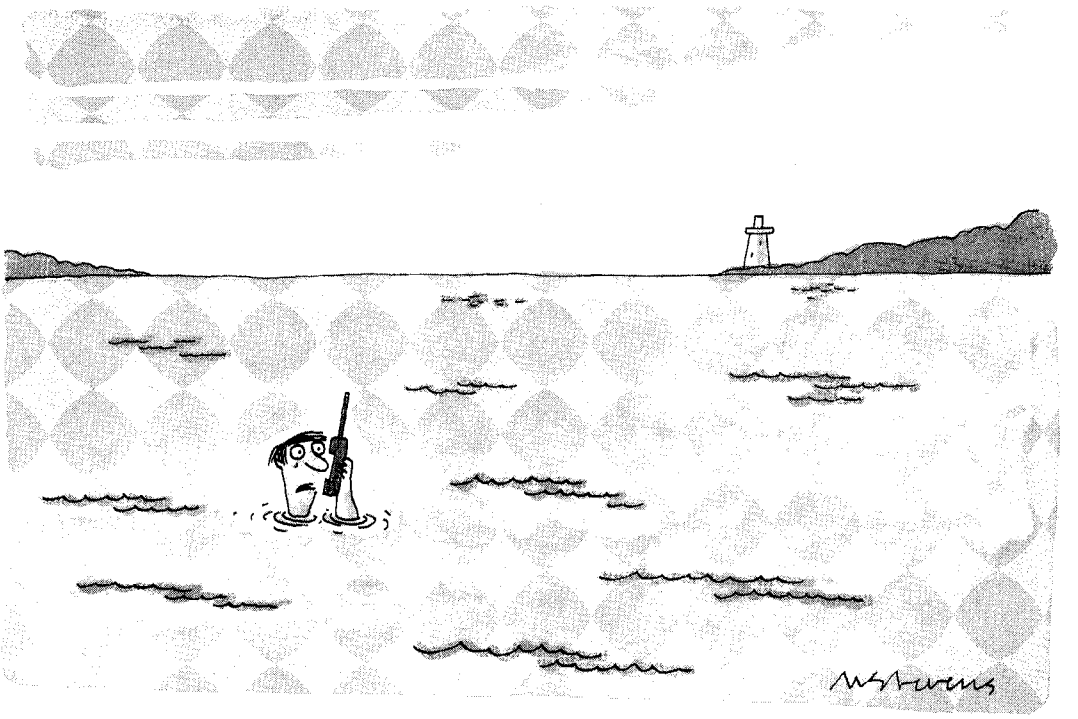
"What did you call the story?"

"For a long time I couldn't think of a title, and then it came to me—'Silence!' I tried to imagine what it must have been like back then, and all I could come up with was how awfully silent it must have been everywhere. I got scared just thinking about it. I sent it in to a competition in Cheb. I got a letter back that said it was sensitively written but that I didn't know how to work with themes properly. They also said it wasn't contemporary enough."

"I wouldn't take it too much to heart. Maybe they were afraid of silence, too."

"I don't understand what they meant, 'working with themes.' "

I would have liked to tell her that I could hardly imagine anything more hopeless than submitting short stories to a competition, or studying in one of our subjugated universities, but I didn't feel like letting on that I had some experience myself with that mass literary grave. Besides, Masha had thrown down her scraper and was plugging her ears because the squadron of fighter planes was screaming over our heads again. Whether they belonged to the Celts or to the other side, they certainly drowned out all the voices, the secret ones and the audible ones.



"Help!"

• •

YEARS ago, I travelled through Scotland. Not because I was interested in the progeny of the Celts; what drew me were the lakes and barren mountains celebrated in old songs and modern myths about primeval monsters. At Inverness I checked into a small hotel and then set off for a walk in the hills that rose over the town. I got only as far as the outskirts, where I heard a woman singing a Scottish song. Her voice was coming through the window of a small house. I'd heard Scottish songs and ballads sung in English, but this woman was singing in Gaelic, and I heard the old melodies as they had sounded originally.

I know that music cannot be described in words, just as words cannot express eternity, God, infinity, or the soul. So I leaned against a stone fence post, listening to the woman singing, and looked at the rocky, barren mountains. Suddenly, the sun emerged from behind a cloud and illuminated a distant hillside. In the sharp light that defined a strip of rocky ground, I saw a white stone structure. It stood alone in a large field of heather. Even at that distance, I could see that the cracks between the stones were overgrown with moss, there was no glass in the windows, and the walls were strangely distorted. Outside a low doorway, on a bench, sat an old man in a white coat. He was looking toward me. I was overcome with inexpressible excitement: I knew that this house was the place I had been gravitating toward all my life. It was the home I had been looking for. I was expected. I knew that when I stepped over the threshold, the embrace into which I would sink would surround me and fill me forever with joy.

Then the woman came to the end of her song, and everything vanished.

I could have continued my walk into the hills, but I understood that my real reason for coming here had been fulfilled. I could expect nothing more blissful. So I walked back into town, packed my suitcase, and went to the station.

Only later did I realize how, through

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the voice, in a land apparently so distant, I had heard my own genius loci speaking to me. It was a voice that could not reach me at home, for it was drowned out by the shouts and arguments and laughter that fill every homeland. Like Masha, I tried to write about it—several times, in fact—but of course I never found the right words.

"I've just been thinking," said Vítek, "that the whole Ice Age must have been caused by a huge cloud of ashes. What if those people way back then were as stupid as we are, and invented everything we have?"

"And you think that they wouldn't have left a trace of themselves behind?" said Lída.

"Why should they? What do you think will be left of all this?" he said, pointing contemptuously at the unfinished structures of iron and steel around him, his own work. "The rust will eat all this up in a couple of years."

"Rubbish, Vítek," said Petra. "You'll never convince me. How about just taking off another layer over here?" And the foreman obediently took up his pick and carefully began to loosen the clay.

The voice through which the spirit of place speaks to those who listen is common to us all: to me and to those people who moved from the backwaters of my homeland more than two millennia ago. By calling it a "voice" I don't mean anything mystical, some voice of blood and soil. I'm surprised that most people don't hear it, don't feel the natural reasons for affinity with each other. I'm surprised that they invent other reasons, more artificial ones, for sticking together: race, or faith, or ideas. They are more eager to believe that their lives are influenced by the positions of planets than by the shape of the mountains surrounding their birthplace, or the height of the heavens above them, or the direction of the winds that bring the clouds.

How can we not feel some affinity for people who have followed every day the meanderings of the same river as we have, climbed the same hills, seen the same flocks of birds each spring, and for whom darkness and light, the cold season and the fruitful season, arrived at the same time?

It is probable that very soon we will have altered the courses of all our rivers, cut down all our forests, killed off the migrating birds, and obscured the boundary between day and night—in other words, that we will have broken the ties that bind us to our ancestors, those of our blood and those not of our blood, the tie that binds us to our homeland and therefore to the earth. And then we will have hurled ourselves into the emptiness of the universe.

"Jesus, Mary, and Joseph! Look! Come and look!" cried Petra suddenly. And we all rushed out of our graves to see what she'd found.

"Bronze!" she cried. "I've got something bronze!" She was carefully peeling away thin layers of clay with a paring knife.

"My word, there it is," said Lída, kneeling beside Petra, her gaze fixed on a particular spot in the grave.

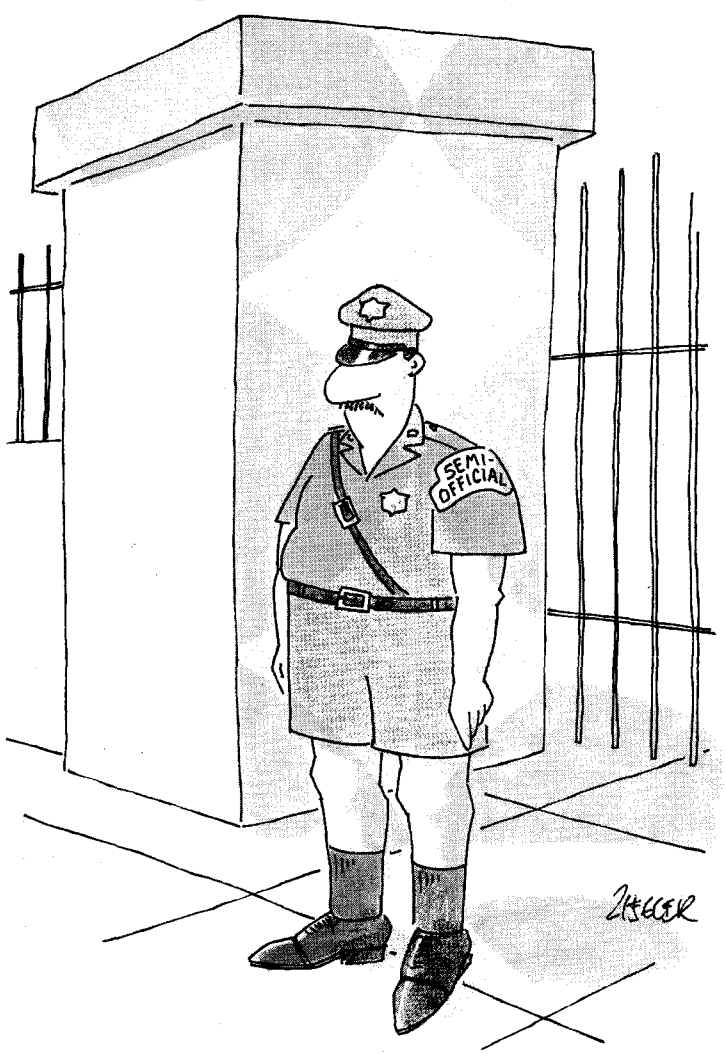
All I could see were several poisonous-looking greenish spots.

Petra got up, sat on one of the stones that edged the grave site, took out a cigarette, and lit it. Her fingers were trembling. "This would happen now," she complained, "just as I was getting ready to call it a day."

Lída brought over a box, then she and Petra knelt in the grave and began peeling back thin layers of clay bit by bit. "It was Mother Earth," sighed Petra. "She could feel our strength and enthusiasm running out." She cut a rectangle of clay out of the earth; a thin, greenish line was visible in it.

"What do you think it is?" whispered Masha.

The knife was very slowly scraping back the clay. It was already past quitting time; the construction workers had suddenly emerged from their hiding places and were trudging along the pathway that led to the back gate.



I gathered up the tools and put them in the wheelbarrow.

The Vietnamese men were now all shiny and clean; they had changed out of their overalls and into jeans. They stopped a little way off and spoke together in their impenetrable language. The taller of the two came up and looked curiously into the grave. "Did you find something for your pleasure, Madame?"

Petra looked up. She hesitated for a moment, as though wondering whether they were worthy of hearing such important news. "A bronze," she announced dryly.

"After all!" said the man happily. "Congratulation." He nodded to his mate, who approached quietly. Then, as if on command, both of them bent over the grave in unison. Petra leaned slightly to one side and pointed to

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the thin green line in the soil. The smaller Vietnamese extended his index finger and declared, in his exotic Bohemian accent, "I have seen already. When I dig a trench at home, I find such thing."

"What did you do with it?" asked Vítek.

"Had no time," sighed the Vietnamese. "It was too much shooting." And then, as though he'd revealed too much, he caught himself, nodded his head, and hurried away to the gate, followed by his companion.

The pointed bronze object was almost entirely exposed now. Masha, standing beside me, was scarcely breathing. "It's beautiful!" Then she stopped. "I hope it's not another one of those sacrificial knives."

The notion that not long ago people still offered human sacrifices to the gods appalls us, and we feel superior because as humans we are so distant from that primitive cruelty. But when I think of the endless masses of people sacrificed in my own lifetime, not to the gods but to the insane visions of those who put themselves in the place of those gods, it seems to me that we have no reason to feel superior at all.

At last Petra carefully liberated that rare object from its grave, laid it in the box, and said, "Tune in tomorrow!" Masha swept the grave site again, and then the women went to the trailer to change. Vítek the foreman also disappeared, so that he could take a quick inspection tour around the emptying construction site and still be able to walk Petra to the bus.

Masha came up with her makeshift bicycle. "Too bad *we* didn't find anything," she said to me.

"Maybe tomorrow." I watched as she skillfully maneuvered her bicycle around the piles of earth. Perhaps back when she found her first ancient fragment, she, too, had heard the voice of the local spirits.

I HAVE suggested that the voices urged us only to submit or to escape. Yet I know that's not how it was at all. Most probably, the voices counselled caution or moderation. The cowardly took them as an appeal to submit; the restless or impatient as an invitation to flee. But there must have been others still who understood that they were to stay—to hold out and to survive—because without them the land would be left empty and dumb. Perhaps the graves of these people will yet be found, or perhaps they were so poor that there was nothing at all in their graves. But I am certain that they lived here and stayed on.

I consider them my true kinsmen: by fate, by place, and by choice.

It was suffocatingly hot in the trailer. I opened the window as wide as I could and then went to wash in the bathroom that had never been cleaned.

The construction site was silent. The wretched metal structures rose pointlessly out of the earth. The piles of dirt cast long shadows and blushed red in the setting sun. A short distance beyond the trailer, a huge digger reached out its long arm toward me. Girders, painted planks, and sheets of plastic lay scattered everywhere on the ground.

I walked back to the trailer, sat down on the steps, and watched evening descend over the piles of earth. A strange world, where the cleanest, tidiest, most stimulating place is a two-and-a-half-thousand-year-old burial ground. Somewhere in the distance I could hear a dog barking and the faint rumbling of a truck's engine.

Suddenly, from near the burial ground, I heard a sound—as though someone were pounding metal trash-can lids together. The clatter echoed with improbable force through the silent construction site. I got up from the step and cautiously walked along the empty path to the graves.

The banging continued at the same pitch, and fell silent only when I reached the spot from which the graves could be seen. I climbed up on a pile of earth and scrutinized the area in front of me. There was no sign of movement anywhere. No sooner had I started back than the lids began to bang again.

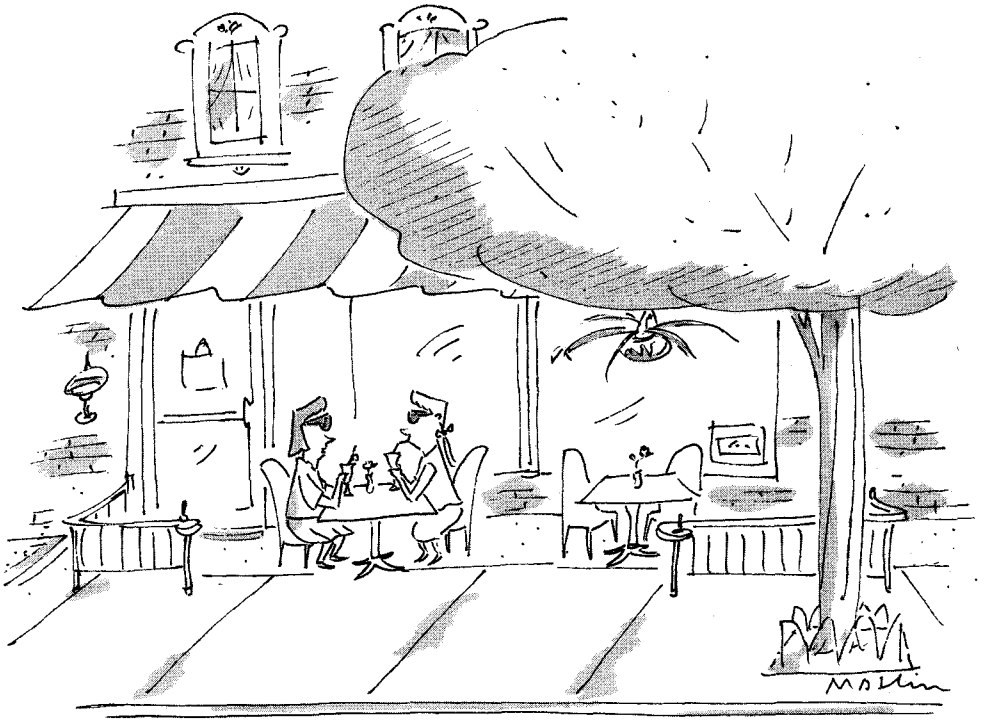
Who knows what the voices of our home spirits sound like? Who would be foolhardy enough to claim that he can hear them?

I sat down on the steps again. A mist was rising off the woods on the opposite hillside. You listen all your life, trying to distinguish which of the voices you hear are essential, which resonate with your inner self, and which are merely empty chatter tempting you into the universal abyss.

The metallic voice sounded for a while longer, and then gradually faded, as though it were disappearing into the depths of the earth. But I could still hear it long after it had fallen silent.

—IVAN KLÍMA

(*Translated, from the Czech, by Paul Wilson.*)



"We were inseparable, until the separation."

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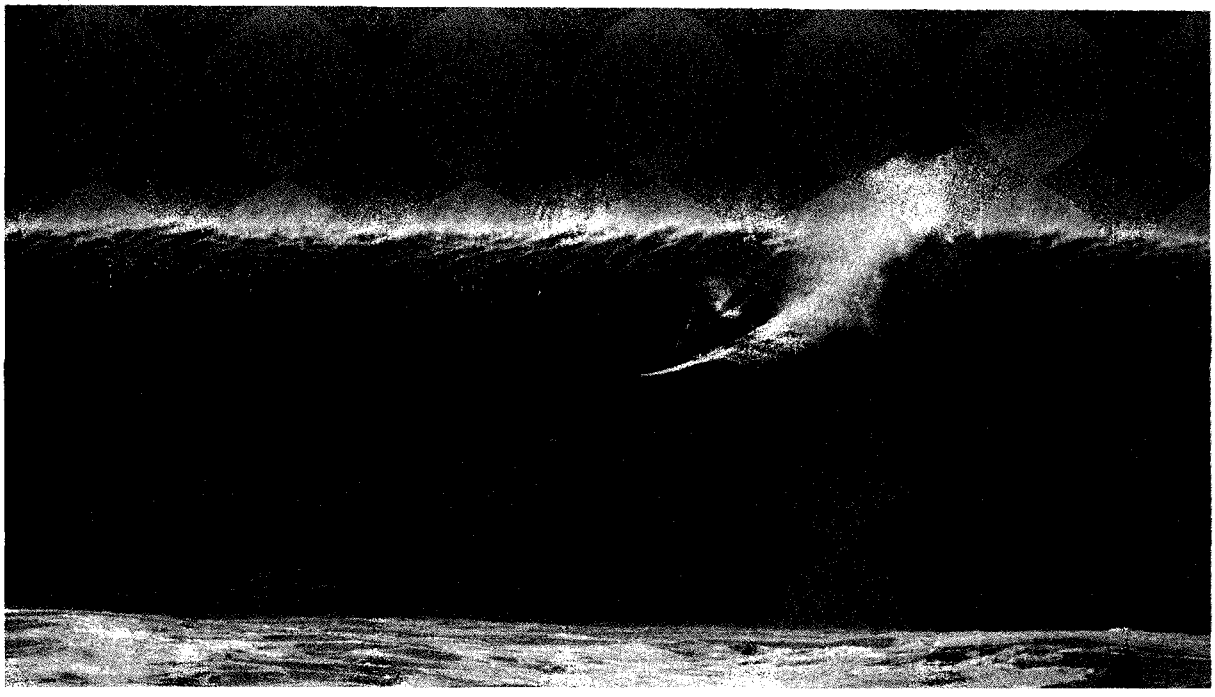
THE SPORTING SCENE

PLAYING DOC'S GAMES—I



Tim Finley/Beach Photos

Mark Renneker at Sloat

WISE SURFBOARDS, the only surf shop in San Francisco, is a bright, high-ceilinged place flanked by a Mexican restaurant and a Christian day-care center out in the far reaches of a sleepy working-class seaside suburb known as the Sunset District. Bob Wise, the shop's proprietor, was talking to a small group of local surfers one winter afternoon when I stopped in. "So Doc, who can see the surf from his window, calls me up and says, 'Come on, let's go out,' " Wise said. "So I keep asking him, 'But how is it?' And he goes, 'It's *interesting*.' So I go over there and we go out and it's just totally terrible. So Doc says, 'What did you expect?' Turns out that when Doc says it's *interesting*, that means it's *worse* than terrible."

Wise was talking about Mark Renneker, a family-practice physician and surfer who lives in the Sunset District. And so were two young guys I overheard a few days later at a windy overlook on the south side of the Golden Gate. We were watching surf break against the base of the long black cliff beneath us—the spot down there is called Dead Man's, and the tide was still too high for surfing it—when one of them pointed north and howled. Across the Gate, which is a magnificent stretch of water running from the Pacific Ocean into San Francisco Bay, giant waves were breaking in a shipping hazard known as the Potato Patch. Although they were several miles from where we stood, and wind-ripped and horribly confused, the waves had, because they were so big, the three-dimensionality of waves seen from much closer. "Hey, give me your binoculars," one of the young guys said to the other. "Doc's probably out there."

Actually, Mark was working that afternoon at a clinic in inner-city San Francisco, but the kids on the cliff were not misinformed: Mark *had* tried to surf the Potato Patch—an idea so farfetched and scary that those who knew the area, but had not talked to the witnesses, invariably refused to believe it. Since these guys were not, I knew, San Francisco surfers, of whom there were only a few dozen, their remarks meant that Mark's notoriety was no longer confined to the city.

That morning, I had stood on another overlook—a sand embankment at Ocean Beach, in the Sunset District—and watched Mark demonstrate some of the qualities that gave him his peculiar status among other surfers. The waves were big, ragged, relentless, with no visible channels for getting through the surf from the shore. Getting out looked impossible, and the waves looked not worth the effort anyway, but Mark was out there, a small black-wetsuited figure in a world of furious white water, throwing himself into the stacked walls of onrushing foam. Each time he seemed to be making headway, a new set of waves would appear on the horizon, bigger than the last and breaking farther out (the biggest were breaking perhaps two hundred yards from shore), and drive him back into the area that surfers call the impact zone.

Watching with me was Tim Bodkin, a hydrogeologist, surfer, and Mark's next-door neighbor. Bodkin was getting a huge kick out of Mark's ordeal. "Forget it, Doc!" he kept shouting into the wind, and then he would laugh. "He's never going to make it. He just won't admit it." At times, we lost sight of him altogether. The waves rarely gave him a chance even to clamber onto his surfboard and paddle; mostly, he was underwater, diving under waves, swimming seaward along the bottom somewhere, dragging his board behind him by a leash attached to his ankle. After thirty minutes, I began to worry: the water was very cold, and the surf was very powerful.

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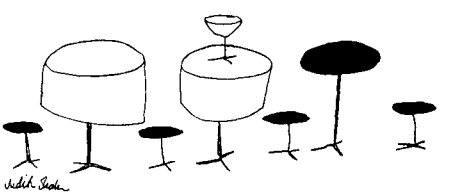
Bodkin, aglow with schadenfreude, did not share my concern. Finally, after about forty-five minutes, there was a brief lull in the waves. Mark scrambled onto his board and paddled like a windmill in a hurricane, and within three minutes he was outside, churning over the crests of the next set with five yards to spare. Once he was safely beyond the surf, he sat up on his board to rest, a black speck bobbing on a blue, windblown sea. Bodkin, disgusted, left me alone on the embankment.

I knew how Bodkin felt. Mark's joy in surfing adversity had often appalled me. Earlier that winter, he and I had been out together in big surf at Ocean Beach. We paddled out easily—conditions were immaculate, the channels easy to read—but we misjudged the size of the surf and took up a position that was too close to shore. Before we caught our first waves, a huge set caught us inside.

The first wave snapped my ankle leash—a ten-foot length of polyurethane, strong enough to pull a car uphill—as if it were a piece of string. I swam underneath that wave and then kept swimming, toward the open ocean. The second wave looked like a three-story building. It, like the first wave, was preparing to break a few yards in front of me. I dived deep and swam hard. The lip of the wave hitting the surface above me sounded like a bolt of lightning exploding at very close range, and it filled the water with shock waves. I managed to stay underneath the turbulence, but when I surfaced I saw that the third wave of the set belonged to another order of being. It was bigger, thicker, and drawing much more heavily off the bottom than the others. My arms felt rubbery, and I started hyperventilating. I dived very early and very deep. The deeper I swam, the colder and darker the water got. The noise as the wave broke was preternaturally low, a basso profundo of utter violence, and the force pulling me backward and upward felt like some nightmare inversion of gravity. Again, I managed to escape, and when I finally surfaced I was far outside. There were no more waves, which was fortunate, since I was sure that one more would have finished me. Mark was there, though, perhaps ten yards to my right. He had been duck-diving and escaping the unimaginable just as narrowly as I had. His leash had not broken, however; he was reeling in his board. As he did so, he turned to me, with a manic look in his eyes, and yelled, "This is *great!*" It could have been worse. He could have yelled, "This is *interesting!*"

Weeks later, I learned that, from a recordkeeping point of view, Mark had indeed found that afternoon's surf interesting. He stayed out in the water for four hours (I made the long swim to shore, collected my board, and went home to bed) and measured the wave interval—the time it takes two waves in a wave train (surfers call it a set) to pass a fixed point—at twenty-five seconds. It was the longest interval Mark had ever seen at Ocean Beach. Mark could make this arcane observation—I have never heard another surfer even mention wave interval, let alone measure it—with authority, because he has been keeping, since 1969, a detailed record of every time he goes surfing. He records where he surfed, the size of the waves, the direction of the swell, a description of conditions, what surfboard he rode, who his companions (if any) were, any memorable events or observations, and data for year-to-year comparisons. Thus, the entry for Sunday, December 22, 1985, recorded, among other things, that my leash broke on the twenty-first day of that surf season on which Mark had surfed waves eight feet or bigger, and the ninth day on which he had surfed waves ten feet or bigger.

Mark's logbook also showed that the longest period of time he had gone without surfing since 1969 was three weeks. That happened in 1971, during a brief stint in college in Arizona. Since then, he had twice been forced out of the water for periods of slightly less than two weeks by injuries suffered at Ocean Beach. Otherwise, he had rarely gone more than a few days without surfing, and he had often surfed every day for weeks on end. Jessica Dunne, a painter, with whom Mark has lived since college, says that when he doesn't surf for a few days he becomes odd. "He gets explosive, and he seems to shrink inside his clothes," she says. "And when he hears the surf start to come back up he gets so excited that he can't sleep. You can actually see the muscles in his chest and shoulders swelling as he sits on the couch listening to the surf build through the night." In a sport open only to the absurdly dedicated—it takes years to master the rudiments of surfing, and constant practice to maintain even basic competence—Mark is the fanatics' fanatic. His fanaticism carries him into realms that are literally uncharted, such as the Potato Patch. "One thing about Doc," says Bob Wise, who has been surfing in San Francisco for almost thirty years. "He keeps open the idea that anything is possible."



With me, Mark for years kept open the possibility that I might rise before dawn on a winter day, pull on a cold, damp wetsuit, and throw myself into the icy violence of big Ocean Beach. I came to dread his early-morning calls. Dreams full of giant gray surf and a morbid fear of drowning would climax with the scream of the phone in the dark. For most surfers, I think—for me, certainly—waves have a spooky duality. When you are absorbed in surfing them, they seem alive, each with a distinct, intricate personality and quickly changing moods, to which you must react in the most intuitive, almost intimate way—too many surfers have likened riding waves to making love—and yet waves are not alive, not sentient, and the lover you reach to embrace can turn murderous without warning. Somehow, this duality doesn't seem to haunt Mark. His conscious life and his unconscious life have a weird seamlessness. His surfing dreams, as he recounts them, all seem to be about recognizable places on recognizable days. He notes the tides and swells in his dreams as if they were going into his logbook. If he's upset when he wakes, it's because he was looking forward to riding one more dream wave. His voice on the other end of the line at dawn was always bright, raucous, from the daylight world: "Well? How's it *look*?"

Mark can see the south end of Ocean Beach from his apartment. I, during the years I lived in San Francisco, could see the north end from mine. I would stumble, shivering, to the window, peer through freezing, blurry binoculars at a cold, wild sea.

"It looks . . . scary."

"Well? Let's hit it!"

Other surfers also got these siren

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AUSTIN, TEXAS

A small, peaceful place where I could go about
my own affairs, without reproaches.

I've searched for something like this
since the first day of elementary school.

But it wasn't easy to know
that something like it actually existed.

And, truth to tell, every country I lived in
was a foreign country.

How strange, not to say unaccustomed:
to *stay*, to *remain*.

The first time was a spring night in 1972.
The whole world was dark, warm, humid:

incomprehensible from the airplane steps on.
Groped for a window. But was already outside.

I checked in at Villa Capri,
a motel that's been gone for a number of years.

Weinstock and Rovinsky picked me up
in the thundering, warm rain, both in net undershirts,

and the lightning photographed their still young,
energetic faces with black beards.

Strongest were the smells of rotting wood,
vegetation, mud, and Southern honeysuckle.

I forgot my raincoat at the motel.
Just as Dr. Freud would have liked!

But there was music in the humidity. It came from every
street. Ballads and blues and a special kind of

pensive jazz. It resembled nothing else I'd heard.
It came from warmer air, smelling of earth.

For a decade now, it's been my everyday life.
The large, serious faces of my students,

grocery bills, and the dog digging
overmuch in the rose bed.

For Benjamin, it's all self-evident.
But never really for me.

Never again to need my wool mittens,
sleeping like nice kittens in the closet!

A place where everything grows, if you only
drop it into the ground, under large trees

that are made happy when the wind starts blowing.
Certain things remain forever incomprehensible:

the storm of insect sounds on hot nights,
the mysterious warm darkness. A solitary trumpet

blue as night, from a lighted window.
Sunrises when the whole world is on fire

and the black herons sit, heavy
like Hugin and Munin, in old dead river trees.

Rovinsky doesn't live here anymore, and Weinstock's
hair and beard are white. The telephone is ringing

and wants to sell me credit cards. Office buildings grow
and acquire glass fronts, black as the river.

But the shade under the trees is what it is, and in
the river under the bridge giant carp are sleeping,

that will be there forever, and no boy will catch.

—LARS GUSTAFSSON

(*Translated, from the Swedish, by Yvonne L. Sandstroem.*)

• •

calls. Edwin Salem, a onetime protégé of Mark's, says he used to lie awake half the night worrying that the phone would ring, and then panic if it did: "Doc only called me when it was big and he knew nobody else would go out with him. I usually would."

Everyone who surfs has a limit to the size of the waves he will venture among. The surfers in an area come, over time, to know one another's limits. In San Francisco, this mutual knowledge creates a dense little community, nervous and drawling, in the beach parking lots on big winter days—men pacing back and forth, fists plunged in pockets, discussing the matter with dry mouths, laughing too loudly while, out at sea, frightening waves rear and collapse. We study the waves, study the channels, trying to decide if the surf is within the range we can conceivably handle. That range is as much psychic as physical, and it is inseparable from the group: if X goes out, that doesn't necessarily mean I have to go out, but if Y goes out, I'll have to follow, because anything within his range is, I know, within mine.

When I lived in San Francisco, the only other surfer whose range approached Mark's was Bill Bergerson, a local carpenter whom everyone called Peewee—an unlikely nickname, left over from the days when he was somebody's younger brother. Peewee is a quiet, intense, exceptionally smooth surfer, probably the best pure surfer San Francisco has produced. His interest in big waves is not, however, indiscriminate. He does not try to surf every big day that comes along; he will ride big waves only when they are clean. Mark, for his part, will go out in borderline madness, when no one else will even consider it. Then he will

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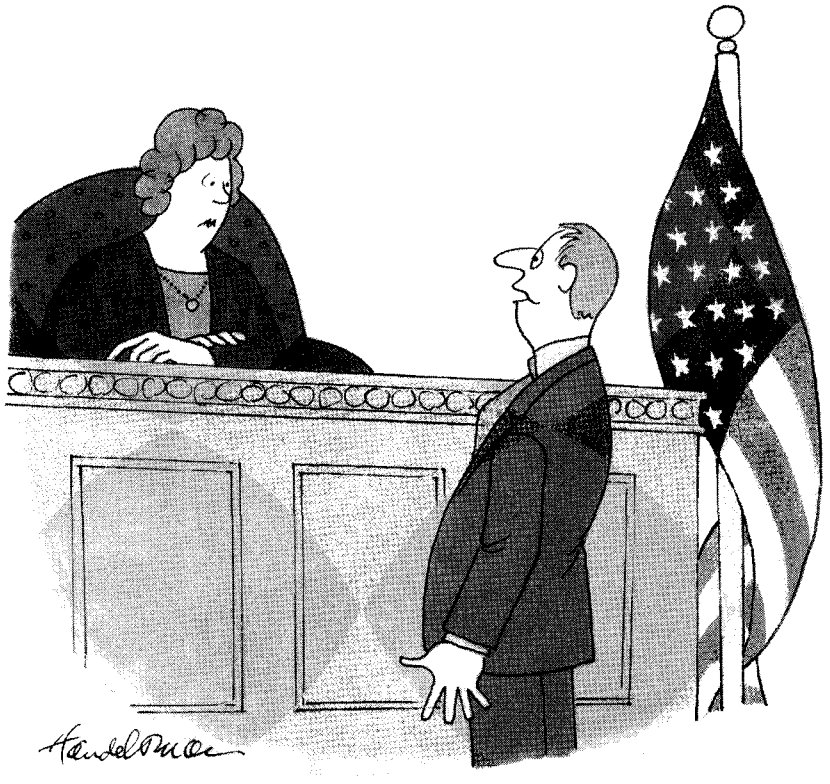
go out in sheer madness. And come in laughing. Worst of all, he is not shy with other people's demons: Edwin's, his patients', Wise's, mine.

ONE of my demons was surfing itself. It had started out as a boyish passion, but it had long since turned into something else. I'd been surfing for nearly twenty years when I moved to San Francisco, in 1983, at the age of thirty. There had been periods when I didn't surf—while I was living in Europe, or Montana, or New York City—but I had always found my way back to it. All in all, I had spent a staggering amount of time and energy looking for and riding waves. In the early nineteen-eighties, one of the surfing magazines (there are several) published a list of what its editors reckoned were the ten best surf spots in the world, and I realized I had surfed nine of them. What was more, the best wave I had surfed was not on the list. That was because only a handful of people knew that it existed. Finding that wave, off an uninhabited island in Fiji, had been the high point of a trek that kept me out of the United States for nearly four years. The search for new waves had carried me to strange and wonderful places—immersing me, once or twice, so deeply in the life of tropical fishing villages that, laid low by malaria, I nearly stayed for good. But it was an odd thing to arrange one's life around. By the time I moved to San Francisco, I had been firmly confining surfing to the sidelines of my life for several years.

Mark undertook to reverse this trend. He had written to me in New York when he heard I was thinking of moving, sending a photograph of himself on a beautiful, wind-brushed Ocean Beach wave—a wave he claimed was merely "average"—and, once I got to town, he seemed to expect me to be ready to surf at all times. He knew I had another life, but he wouldn't hear "excuses." My ambivalence about the sport drove him nuts. It was heresy. Surfing was not a "sport." It was a "path." And the more you poured into it the more you got back from it—he himself was the exuberant proof of that. I knew I wasn't the only object of Mark's exhortations to take surfing more seriously, and my ambivalence persisted, but his enthusiasm had its effects. It got me out in the water more often than I would have gone otherwise; it also got my attention. Surfing and I had been married, so to speak, for most of my life, but it was one of those marriages in which little is said. I rarely talked about surfing, didn't write about it, didn't even think about it much. It contributed little to how I saw myself. I just did it—less constantly now than before, but no less automatically. Mark wanted to help me and surfing patch up our stubborn, silent marriage. I didn't think I wanted it patched up. Having a sizable tract of unconsciousness near the center of my life suited me, somehow. And yet, over the course of my first winter at Ocean Beach, I found myself beginning to fill notebooks with surf-related sketches, oceanographic observations—and descriptions of Dr. Renneker.



"Now that I've swung back to depression, I'm truly sorry for what I did when I was manic."

• •

MARK looks, at a glance, and especially when he wears a coat, like some Russian Orthodox monk who has wandered off the taiga—a sunburned young Solzhenitsyn. He has an unkempt brown beard, a large, narrow, sun-reddened nose, hair that falls a good five inches below his shoulders, and small, dolefully downsloping blue eyes. He even makes a habit of wearing sandals. He seldom wears a coat, though; his wardrobe tends toward T-shirts or aloha shirts or no shirt, even in winter. And his physique does not suggest a life of frequent prayer. Thirty years of surfing (Mark is forty) have left him with a great rack of muscles across his back and chest. He carries less fat on him than a racing greyhound: he stands six feet four and weighs a hundred and eighty pounds. The doleful shape of his eyes is also misleading. Closer inspection usually finds them lit with amusement, and weather-deepened spiderwebs at their corners have clearly been formed by constant laugh action. His laugh is loud and, in quality, falls somewhere between a honk and a roar.

For someone so tall, Mark is remarkably unself-conscious. He carries himself like a ballet dancer, and his walk, in its precision, borders on the feminine. Before he goes surfing, he ritually performs an elaborate series of yoga stretches at the water's edge, and I have never seen him skimp on this warmup—not even when bystanders snickered—or cross the sand with any less precise a swagger. Being tall can be a disadvantage in surfing; few top competitors are over six feet. As in gymnastics, a low center of gravity is

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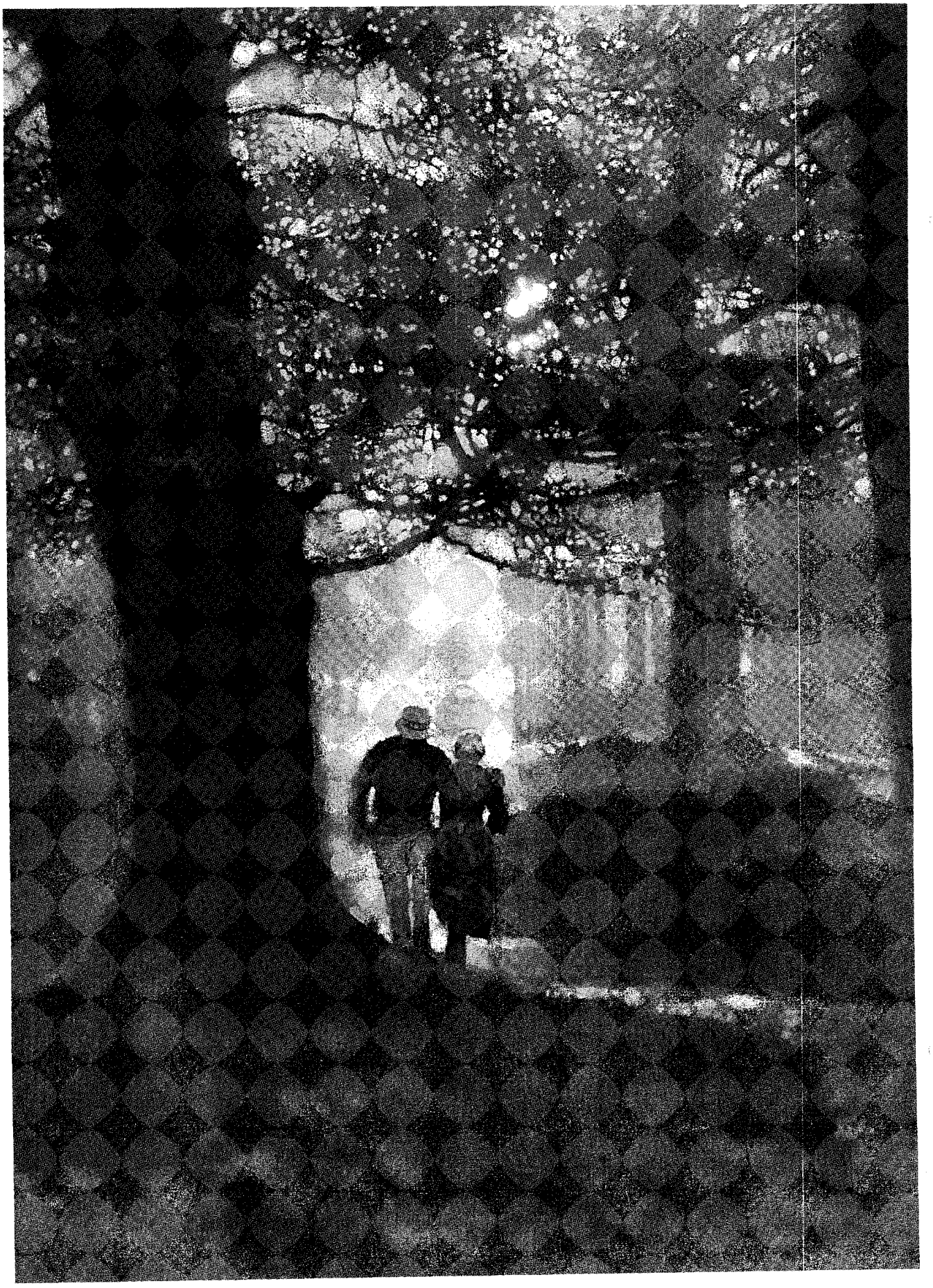

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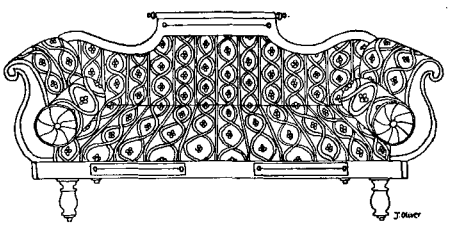
crucial to great balance. Mark has a low, almost crouching style of surfing that, while not especially beautiful, is superbly balanced, and compensates effectively for his height. In big waves, where brute strength and stability become critical factors, his height, combined with his hunkered-down style, seems to work to his advantage: he uses it to lever the long, hard, high-speed turns that big waves avail, and to absorb the sharp, powerful shocks that even small irregularities in the surface transmit at high speed.

He has also had to compensate for poor vision. His original nickname in San Francisco was, in fact, Doc Hazard, for he was once considered something of a Mr. Magoo in the water. Mark believes that his nearsightedness helped him develop good wave judgment—"It forced me to concentrate on patterns rather than data," he says—but concedes that when he started wearing contact lenses his surfing "improved a hundred per cent." He loses a lens every now and then in the water. Once, after losing a lens in a vicious wipeout, he felt something odd in his mouth and spat out the missing lens. Another chronic condition that affects his surfing is asthma; Mark has suffered from it since childhood. The worst attacks, which tend to come in the spring, sometimes actually keep him out of the water.

Mark, who grew up in Los Angeles, started surfing when he was ten. His parents had enrolled him in a junior-lifeguard program, and, on a field trip to Arroyo Sequit, a beach north of Los Angeles known to surfers as Secos, he paddled out on a lifeguard's board and rode his first wave. He was hooked. That summer, he subscribed to the magazine *Surfer*, festooned his bedroom with surf posters and decals, and bought every Beach Boys record. It was 1962, the Gidget-era surfing craze was hard upon the land, and Mark, along with ten million other American kids, was going to Surf City. However, he didn't want to get there by the normal, mass-fad route if he could avoid it. Although he had ridden that first wave at Secos on his feet, he did not start with standup surfing. He and his friends instead went in for bodysurfing and, later, bellyboarding and kneeboarding. "We had this arrogant idea," Mark says. "We thought the coolest thing was to surf *without* a board. A board just got between you and the wave. The board surfers looked down on us, literally, but we also looked down on them."

Mark's parents were divorced when he was thirteen. He lived with his mother, a former fashion model, but he and his father, a psychiatrist, remained close. Even when Mark was a teen-ager, he and his father were always together: golfing, fishing, hiking, camping, travelling up and down the coast. (They even hopped a freight train once.) The news that his father might have cancer—news that came while Mark was in pre-medical studies at the University of California at Santa Cruz—had a profound effect on Mark. He began to study cancer with an intensity that convinced many of his friends that his goal was to find a cure in time to save his father. As it turned out, his father did not have cancer. Mark kept on with his cancer studies. His interest was not, in fact, in oncology—in finding a cure—but in the field of cancer education and prevention. By the time he entered medical school, he was the director of a project called the Biology of Cancer, sponsored by the American Cancer Society; had created, with another student, a series of university courses on cancer; and had co-authored "The Biology of Cancer Sourcebook," the text for a course series that has since been offered to more than forty thousand students on some seventy-five campuses. While Mark was still in medical school he received a National Honors Citation from the American Cancer Society and was named a director at large on the board of directors of the California division of the American Cancer Society. He also co-wrote a second book, "Understanding Cancer," which became a best-selling university text; it is currently in its third edition, with Mark, who has written a series of updates, now listed as the sole author. Although his medical specialty is family practice, Mark continues to lecture throughout the United States on cancer research, education, and prevention.

"The funny thing is, I'm not really interested in *cancer*," Mark says. "I'm interested in people's response to it. Heart disease—cardiovascular disease, stroke, arteriosclerosis, heart attacks, hypertension—kills three times as many people as cancer does. But if you ask people what they fear most the answer you hear most is cancer. And when someone actually has cancer it really strips away the bullshit. Akira Kurosawa made a great movie—'Ikiru,' which means 'To Live'—about a man who discovers he has a terminal cancer and who only then finally sets out to *live*. A lot of cancer patients and survivors report that they never really lived till they got cancer, that it forced them to face things, to experience life more intensely. What you see in family practice is that families just can't afford to be superficial with each other anymore once someone has cancer. Corny as it sounds, what I'm really interested in is the human spirit—in how people react to stress and adversity. I'm fascinated by the way people fight back, by how they keep fighting their way to the surface." Mark claws at the air with his arms. What he is miming is the struggle to reach the surface through the turbulence of a large wave.



THE fact that San Francisco gets some of the best waves in California has been, at least until recently, a well-kept secret. Santa Cruz, a college town sixty miles south of the big city, is a surfing center, but only a handful of the thousands of people who surf there have ever surfed in San Francisco. When Mark started medical school, at the University of California at San Francisco, in 1975, he assumed that he would be constantly travelling back to Santa Cruz to surf. He was wrong.

There was a small crew of local surfers, most of them Sunset District homeboys, but the surf-based youth culture that flourishes in so many coastal towns and cities—there are said to be some five million surfers worldwide, a million and a half on the West Coast of the United States alone—has never taken hold in San Francisco. Indeed, native San Franciscans will tell you that there is no surfing in San Francisco. There is surf, of course, but the ocean, they say, is too cold and stormy for surfing. True, the ocean off San Francisco is often too stormy for *learning* to surf (the nearest beginner breaks are outside the city), which is the main

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reason the area has been so little known in surfing circles. A high proportion of San Francisco surfers learned their chops elsewhere—in Hawaii, Australia, or Southern California—and, like Mark, moved to the city only as adults. These newcomers, who tend to be professionals, remain distinct in some ways from the homegrown surfers, who tend to be working-class, but all have shared an interest in keeping the secret of San Francisco's great surf. And it was this obscurity—the *unmappedness* of Ocean Beach, especially—that, along with the size and quality of the waves, made it an ideal home break for Mark.

"Mark has this deep need to be different," Dr. Michael Rowbotham says. Rowbotham, a neurologist and surfer from Los Angeles, went through medical school with Mark. San Francisco, he says, with its vast tracts of *mare incognitum*, provided Mark—who when everyone else was surfing standing up was kneeboarding or bellyboarding or bodysurfing—with endless opportunities to be different: to surf previously unattempted spots, or previously unattempted conditions, in previously unimagined ways.

"Making a place yours—that's a lot of what surfing is about," Mark says. As a teen-ager, he remembers, he used his surf travels as a mental-relaxation technique. "I would run my mind up the coast, surf spot by surf spot. I'd start somewhere down in Mexico, and then try to remember one moment, one wave, one detail of every place I had surfed, working my way north. By the time I was in college, I'd surfed hundreds of places. Still, I'd sometimes get all the way to Santa Cruz. It was a great way to hit on secure, happy places inside myself."

Mark had, in other words, already made a lot of places his before he got to San Francisco. Yet he took on the city's surf on a new scale. Even in medical school, he found time to surf virtually every day. "I made a point of never scheduling an appointment with a professor on an outgoing tide," he says. He also made a point, whenever he was in the anatomy laboratory, which is on the thirteenth floor of a building at the U.C. San Francisco Medical Center, of getting up on the cadaver tables to check out the surf at Ocean Beach, three miles distant but visible through the lab's upper windows. Often, the day's dissection had to be postponed until evening because of clean waves. He and Jessica eventually moved into an oceanfront apartment. Mark had always been prone to dream up rituals and rules to surf by—to generate a stream of postulates and hypotheses about waves and weather and surfing—but the freezing wilds of Ocean Beach gave his theorizing new range. He took to mapping its every sandbar, its every shift and subtlety.

Although U.C. San Francisco is one of the best medical schools in the country, and Mark was one of the top students in his class, there was no chance of Mark's becoming a "society doctor," Mike Rowbotham says. "Not with the way he looks, and the way he insists on keeping large blocks of time free to surf." Mark did his family-practice residency at San Francisco General Hospital, and today he is an assistant clinical professor at U.C. San Francisco, a staff physician working with inner-city families at a clinic called the South of Market Health Center, and a specialist in cancer prevention and education at Summit Medical Center in Oakland. He also pulls one overnight shift a week at another local hospital and does a great deal of writing and editing, including a medical-advice column for *Surfer*, and lecturing. "But I do everything I can not to accept a speaking engagement out of town in January," Mark says. January is the best month for big, clean waves at Ocean Beach. When he can't manage a view of Ocean Beach on his daily rounds, he will try to catch a glimpse of the Golden Gate, to see if the surf is showing white against the cliffs on the north side. Because accurate surf prediction helps keep waves missed to a minimum, Mark is a passionate amateur meteorologist, and because the most important element of surf forecasting—besides the obvious local variables, like tide and wind—is the weather out at sea, he carries a marine-weather radio with him in his van while he is on his rounds. Infrared satellite photographs of the West Coast decorate the walls of his and Jessica's apartment, and two satellite pictures clipped from newspapers, each showing huge North Pacific low-pressure systems that

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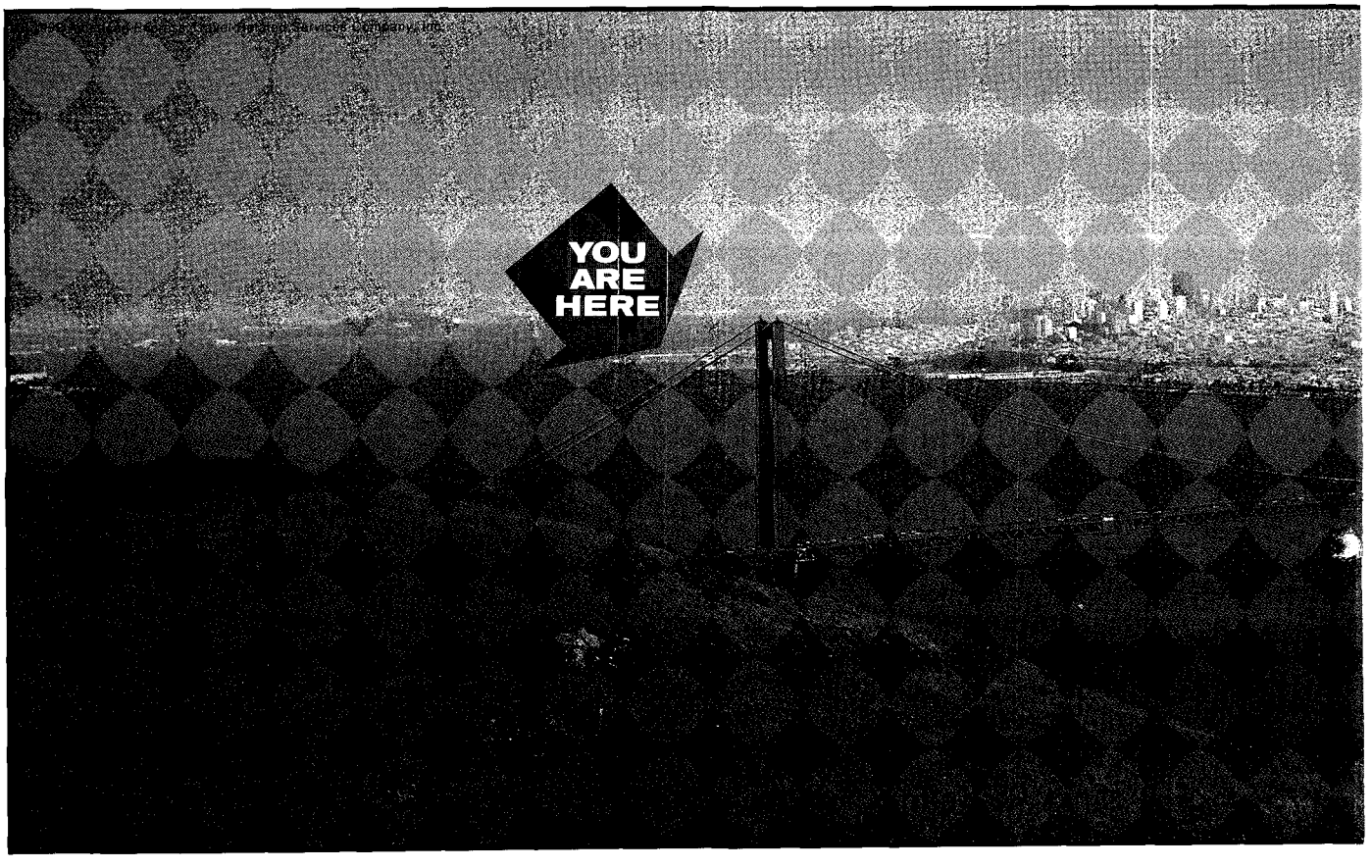
generated memorable swells—"January 9, 1983," Mark says dreamily, "and February 16, 1986"—are taped to the door of his study. Another newspaper photograph on the door shows a surfer on a wave, with the caption "Some Easterners think surfing is done with trick photography." I once read this caption out loud, and it reminded Jessica of a visitor from New York City who stood at their living-room window and, gazing out on a scene of fearsome, fifteen-foot Ocean Beach surf, said, "Now I see why they call it the Pacific. The ocean is much wilder back East."

BEFORE the arrival of Europeans in the Pacific, surfing was practiced throughout Oceania—in Hawaii, Polynesia, New Guinea, even New Zealand. Captain James Cook, the British explorer, saw canoe surfing and bodysurfing in the Society Islands in 1777 and standup board surfing in the Hawaiian Islands in 1778. Cook was fascinated, and so were many of the traders, missionaries, and journalists who followed him, including Mark Twain and Jack London. In Hawaii, surfing had religious significance—after prayers and offerings, skilled craftsmen made boards from sacred koa or wiliwili trees—and it was practiced by men and women, young and old, royalty and peasantry. As Leonard Lueras notes in "Surfing: The Ultimate Pleasure," the sport allowed for fashion statements; a visiting British sea captain, a cousin of Lord Byron, wrote that "to have a neat floatboard, well-kept, and dried, is to a Sandwich Islander what a tilbury or cabriolet, or whatever light carriage may be in fashion is to a young English man." When the surf was good, "all thought of work is at an end, only that of sport is left," wrote Kepelino Keauokalani, a nineteenth-century Hawaiian scholar. "All day there is nothing but surfing. Many go out surfing as early as four in the morning."

This was not what the Calvinist missionaries who began arriving in Hawaii in 1820 had in mind for the islanders as a way of life. Hiram Bingham, who led the first missionary party, which found itself in a crowd of surfers before it had even landed, wrote, "The appearance of destitution, degradation, and barbarism, among the chattering, and almost naked savages, whose heads and feet, and much of their sunburnt skins were bare, was appalling. Some of our number, with gushing tears, turned away from the spectacle." Twenty-seven years later, Bingham wrote, "The decline and discontinuance of the use of the surfboard, as civilization advances, may be accounted for by the increase in modesty, industry or religion." He was not wrong about the decline of surfing. Hawaiian culture had been destroyed, and the people decimated by European diseases; between 1778 and 1893, the Hawaiian population shrank from three hundred thousand to forty thousand, and by the end of the last century surfing had all but disappeared.

A few Hawaiians kept the sport alive during the early years of this century, and a young Irish-Hawaiian named George Freeth, whom Jack London had made famous as "a brown Mercury" in his book "The Cruise of the Snark," went to Southern California in 1907 to give public surfing demonstrations; he travelled at the expense of Henry Huntington, who



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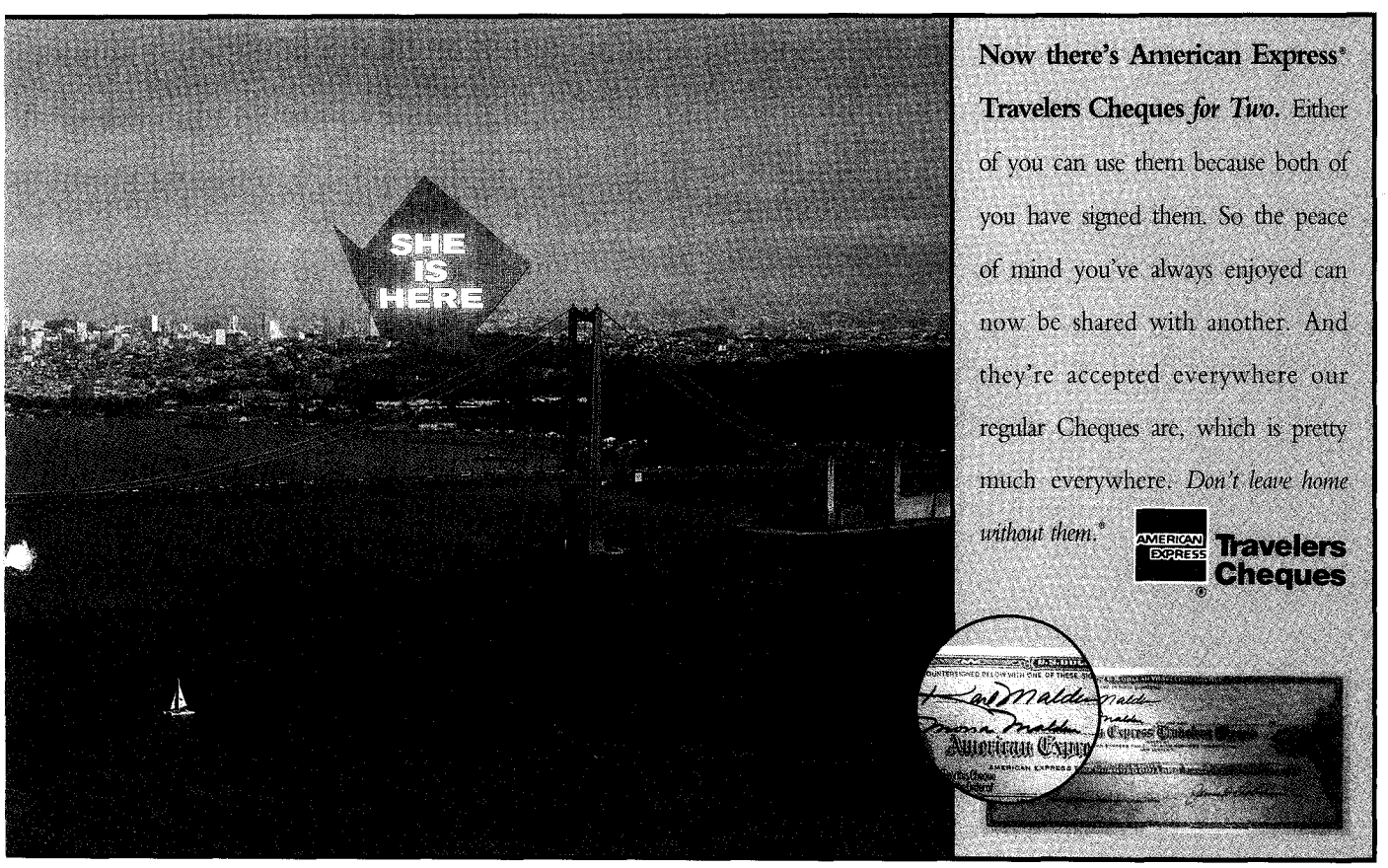
wanted to publicize a new line to the beach on his Pacific Electric Railway. Freeth rode an eight-foot-long, two-hundred-pound redwood board, and later gave his "aquatic performances" at beaches up and down the coast. Surfing caught on in California in a small way, and it began to revive in Hawaii—particularly after Duke Kahanamoku won a gold medal for swimming at the 1912 Olympics, became an international celebrity, and began giving surfing exhibitions around the world.

The heavy, solid-wood boards in use before the Second World War allowed for little maneuvering. The emphasis was on perfect posture, long rides, and gentle breaks that could be ridden more or less straight toward shore. Duke Kahanamoku's thousand-yard ride at one of the "cloud breaks" off Waikiki is the totem story of this era. After the war, the handful of board-makers in Southern California began to experiment with new materials, like catalyzed resin, polyurethane foam, and fibreglass. The result was a dramatically lighter, more maneuverable surfboard and an array of new moves in the surf. The small circle of serious surfers began to grow and—in Southern California, at least—to spawn its own subculture, with vague links to the Beats. The cult hero of this generation among surfers was a Malibu-based stylist named Mickey Dora. Dora surfed with consummate elegance, talked philosophy on the beach with Henry Miller, and scorned mainstream society with a dark, existential wit, making no apologies for a life that revolved purely around surfing.

In the late fifties a Los Angeles writer, Frederick Kohner, turned his daughter Kathy's stories about the Malibu beach crowd she hung out with into "Gidget," a trashy best-selling novel, which, in 1959, was made into "Gidget," a trashy successful movie, starring Sandra Dee and James Darren. The national craze, which had more to do with music, clothes, and sex than it did with the ocean, was launched. Hollywood cashed in with a flurry of "Gidget" sequels (and a "Gidget" television series), a string of "Beach Party" movies starring Frankie Avalon, Annette Funicello, and Don (Big Drop) Rickles, and, in 1964, "Ride the Wild Surf," starring Tab Hunter, Shelley Fabares, and Fabian. The pop charts were full of would-be surf groups: the Ventures, the Beach Boys, Jan and Dean. Even Bo Diddley had to get wet ("Surfin' with Bo Diddley"). Surf fever ran high in landlocked areas, where it could do no harm, but it also sent hundreds of thousands of young fad lemmings rushing into the waves. Crowds became a problem at the better-known breaks. For those who had come before, it was the end of a golden age of unlimited waves with a few friends. That didn't stop stars like Dora, who took the invasion as bitterly as anyone, from trying to profit by it all: he stunt-doubled for Fabian in "Ride the Wild Surf."

Neither did all the schlock stop the growth of the subculture. *Surfer*, which started in 1960 as a surf-movie program, became within ten years a slick, professionally edited monthly with a circulation of nearly a hundred thousand. While Hollywood produced entertainments like "How to Stuff a Wild Bikini," hard-core surf films—gritty, plotless, low-budget—boomed. These films toured the known coasts, selling out high-school auditoriums,



who sometimes see the world a bit differently.

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enthralling audiences with great surfing, and, above all, bearing the word about the avant-garde: the leading board builders, the top surfers, what kind of waves they were riding, and how they were riding them. In the late sixties, a confluence of design innovation and psychotropic drugs produced "the short-board revolution." Where the average surfboard in 1964 had been ten feet long and weighed thirty pounds, the average board in 1971 was six and a half feet long and weighed less than ten pounds. The evolution from the regal, straight-in style of the early modern surfers toward a more kinetic, sharp-cornered style accelerated fantastically with the arrival of short boards. In Australia, surfing had become a national pastime and aggressive surfing the only type permitted, and Australia's ascendancy to the dominant position in competitive surfing coincided with the emergence of short boards.

Twenty years into the short-board era, Mark Renneker and I leaf through surf magazines—there are at least a dozen now—in Wise's shop, shaking our heads. The photographs in the magazines depict sawed-off thicks in pink wetsuits flying through the air on garishly colored, skateboard-size boards. Often there is no wave in sight—just a splash of spray in the lower half of the picture to indicate that this "rad aerial" did begin on a wave. Mark and I are nonplussed. We belong to an earlier school—one in which the wave is not only important but, ideally, the main event. Where we come from, the goal is simply to ride fast, powerful waves with skill and grace, staying as close as possible to the breaking part of the wave. The finest moments are those spent riding "inside the tube"—that is, enclosed in the chamber that some waves form as they break. Hard turns, even gravity-defying maneuvers, are O.K. We ride high-performance boards. We have no truck with the long-board backlash that has developed in Southern California—defiant dinosaurs taking over certain nostalgia-inducing breaks on nine-foot boards, "hanging ten" and yelling "Cowabunga!" We just don't devalue the wave. Or wear pink wetsuits.

MARK and I paddle out at Ocean Beach on a clear, chilly day in early November. It's the first day of a small north swell, and the surf is confused—lumpy, harsh, inconsistent. Mark has convinced me that, before the waves have time to calm down and clean up, northwest winds—which, according to his weather radio, are already blowing twenty-five knots in the Farallon Islands, twenty miles offshore—will be here. Those winds, when they arrive, will wreck the waves completely, so this may be our only chance to surf this swell. Yes, Mark concedes, we are the only surfers in sight, but that's because the others are expecting it to get better later, on the outgoing tide. They don't know about the northwesterlies.

"Or maybe they have jobs," I pant.

"*Jobs*?" Mark laughs. "That was their first mistake."

It's late morning, and still nearly windless. My hands burn with cold, but, because there is a fierce current running, I find no opportunity to sit and warm them in my armpits; we must paddle constantly, even when there are no waves, just to stay in the same place off the beach. The four hundred square miles of San Francisco Bay drain and fill through the Golden Gate twice a day with the tide, generating tremendous side-coast currents along the nearby beaches. We are at the south end of Ocean Beach, a good four miles from the Gate, but we are being sucked north so fast that we are compelled to look only for rights—waves that, on a west-facing coast like California's, break from north to south—in order not to lose ground while we surf. The waves turn out to be better than they looked from shore, and we both get a series of short, fast rides on good-sized waves. Their lumpiness gives them odd, unexpected speed hollows. Mark comes flying out of one thick-muscled closeout (a wave that breaks all at once, leaving a rider nowhere to go) chattering about needing a longer board.

In the moments when the roar of the surf subsides, we can hear monkeys howling at the city zoo, behind the beach embankment. But really San Francisco might as well be in another hemisphere. Ocean Beach in the winter is a wilderness, as raw and red-clawed as any place in the Rocky Mountains. We can see traffic on the coast highway, but it's unlikely that the people in the passing cars see us. Many of them would undoubtedly say, if they were asked, that there is no surfing in San Francisco.

Ocean Beach is four miles long, ruler straight, and, except on the rare warm days, mostly deserted. Winos sprawl in the few small sun traps along the embankment; the homeless sometimes camp there briefly, before the wind and cold drive them away. At high tide, Korean fishermen in rubber boots wrestle with surf-casting rigs. Looking south from the Cliff House, at the north end of the beach, the first mile of shorefront abuts on the west end of the Richmond District—a less seedy version of the Sunset—and the west end of Golden Gate Park, which presents itself as a dense cypress windbreak. The Sunset starts below the park and extends southward for roughly three miles, to Sloat Boulevard, beyond which sandy bluffs begin to rise and the urban oceanfront—Ocean Beach—ends. This morning we paddled out from the base of Sloat Boulevard, and we are fighting the current to stay within sight of it. From the water, especially when the surf is big, the streets running inland become lineup markers—they tell you where you are. In the Sunset, they are named in alphabetical order, from north to south: Irving, Judah, Kirkham, Lawton, Moraga, Noriega, Ortega, Pacheco, Quintara, Rivera, Santiago, Taraval, Ulloa, Vicente, Wawona, and then the oddball, Sloat. You don't say you surf Ocean Beach—you surf Judah or Taraval or Sloat.

Although every block constitutes, for local surfers, a distinct "spot," with a distinct character, Ocean Beach is what surfers call a beach break, meaning that it has no point of land—no reef or river mouth or pier—to define it, and the shape of the waves therefore depends largely on the configuration of the offshore sandbars. That configuration changes constantly—with the tide, the swell, the season, the wind, and an infinite number of other factors, too subtle, too local, to have names. All ocean waves are too complex to predict in any detail, even in laboratory conditions, but beach breaks are, among surf spots, an especially unpredictable species, and Ocean Beach, which receives an unusual amount of groundswell, mainly from the North Pacific, and is also raked daily by great tidal currents, is as complicated a proposition as any surf spot I've seen. A

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generalization that is nonetheless safe to make is that the surf gets more intimidating as you move south. For that reason, Kelly's Cove, a relatively gentle break at the north end of the beach, and VFW's, a break off the end of Golden Gate Park, see many more surfers than the outscale wildness off Taraval does.

Mark can't resist a large, wrapping left. He takes off and, in a matter of seconds, rides halfway to Ulloa. I catch the next wave, also a left, and am carried even farther north. Paddling back out, we are both driven still farther north by a set breaking south of us. We are now so far downcurrent that we decide to abandon Sloat for Taraval. The peak breaking over the sandbar at Taraval is shifty and sloppy, however, and we stop catching waves. A better peak seems to be breaking at Santiago. Mark has an idea: Let's quit fighting the current. When it is this bad on an incoming tide, it turns into the Sloat-Kelly's Express. Let's just ride it north, he says, surfing whatever we find. I am exhausted, and therefore agreeable. We stop paddling south, and soon the beach starts streaming past. It's a goofy, hapless feeling, letting the sandbars come to us, instead of struggling to reach a takeoff spot and stay there. Water flows off a sandbar, and can make it difficult to maintain position at the bar's outside edge, where waves will prepare to break, but the rushing, sinuous current is carrying us across all sorts of spots, at all sorts of angles, willy-nilly.

Mark, who loves half-uncontrolled experiments like this, provides a running commentary on the bars we're traversing. Here is where that great peak broke last year—at Outside Quintara. And this is the lineup on giant days at Pacheco: See that cross on the mountain? You have to keep it above the church. And here you can see that Noriega is starting to do something interesting: "On these pushy swells, it's not really breaking outside and it's not really breaking inside. The inside bar swings out here now, so that it's breaking in the middle, and peeling off in both directions."

Mark is right about the sandbars at Noriega. Surf is no longer breaking on the outside bars that we've been drifting among. We swirl slowly through a wide, waveless blue field. An otter pops up ahead of us, swimming on its back. It has a small, shiny red-brown head, with huge dark eyes. Otters aren't common at Ocean Beach; it's as if this one had been summoned by our peculiarly passive behavior. A certain quietism, a sort of poised patience, is actually essential to surfing. In that sense, it's like hunting. You watch, you wait, and your understanding of your quarry—of, in the surfer's case, waves—is inextricably linked with your physical skill, and thus with your performance. But we are overdoing patience here; the current is now carrying us out to sea. I suggest that we paddle toward shore. Mark reluctantly agrees to abridge our drifting experiment.

On the inside sandbar, as we continue our progress toward Judah, we find short, thick waves breaking with surprising power. I like the quick, steep drops, and catch three straight high-adrenaline rights before stroking into a head-high mistake. My board sticks for a moment in the wave's lip, and then I am launched into space. I try to get away from my board, but dare not dive straight down—the inside bar is shallow. I hit the water awkwardly, twist, and hit the bottom, softly, with one shoulder. I feel my board flash past, actually brushing my arms, which are over my face, in the moment before the wave lands on me. I get thoroughly thrashed, and finally surface, gasping, with what feels like several pounds of sand inside my wetsuit. I've been lucky—I could have been hurt. I scramble back out, head ringing, nose streaming. Mark is fifty yards south of me now. He has started surfing more cautiously. "When it's dredging over a shallow sandbar, that's when you break your neck," he often says. It's a paradox—that someone known for taking the most extreme risks is at the same time so prudent—but it's also true that Mark "makes" a higher percentage of his waves (that is, exits from the wave still on his feet) than any other surfer I know. He simply doesn't take off on waves that he doesn't believe he has an excellent chance of making, and once he commits himself to a wave he hardly ever makes a careless or ill-considered move.

We reconvene after Mark catches a right and I get a long left. As we paddle back out, he announces, "November is big and stupid." What he means is that the surf at Ocean Beach in November is often large but rarely well ordered. But before he can say more we get separated as we rush to avoid an approaching set. A few minutes later, we are again in conversation range. Mark goes on, "The correspondences between what you see on

"I've never, ever taken you for granted, Ingrid."

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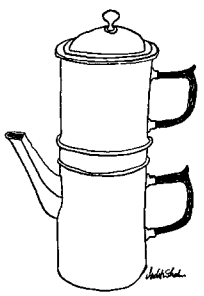
the weather map and what actually arrives at the Beach aren't really established yet." Ten minutes later: "And the same thing is true in the spring. The transition from winter to spring isn't a function of the sandbars changing, the way a lot of people think, but of a change in the prevailing winds about a hundred miles offshore. Out there, heavy northwesterlies start to blow in February, and they tear up the big swells in the open ocean, causing them to show up here in odd fragments that strike the bars at skewed angles. When the clear correspondences between what you see on the weather map and what you see actually arrive at the Beach break down, *that's* springtime at the Beach."



The effort to understand the seasons is, among surfers, constant and occasionally contentious, but at Ocean Beach there is no disputing that winter is when the waves are best. There are great days in the fall, when the first north and west swells of the season meet the first offshore winds. Offshores—winds that blow from land to sea—are the wonder drug of surfing. Because they cross so little water before they reach the waves, they create no troublesome chop, and because they strike the waves from the front they don't force the waves to topple prematurely and haphazardly, the way onshores do, but instead delay their breaking, letting the power of a wave rise, gather, and concentrate in the crest before it can overcome the wind's resistance. Offshores thus make waves hollower (more concave) and cleaner (more regular) and faster. And yet the sum effect of offshore winds is greater than any of its parts. On a good day, their sculptor's blade, meticulous and invisible, seems to drench whole coastlines in grace. In San Francisco, the winter offshores start to blow after the first snowfall in the High Sierras. Fall surf benefits in the local estimation from the inevitable comparison with the months of fogbound, onshore slop that an Ocean Beach summer entails. And the first large swells of the season actually do arrive in November, often before the sandbars are ready to turn them into ridable surf. In December and January, though, the combination of huge winter storm swells and local beach and weather conditions frequently produces waves that beggar description.

Water temperatures range from the high forties to the mid-fifties; the air on winter mornings can be below freezing. Surfers wear full-length wetsuits all year round, usually with bootees, sometimes with a hood and gloves. Hypothermia is, indeed, the greatest single hazard of surfing in San Francisco, particularly in bigger waves, when a broken ankle leash and adverse currents may oblige one to swim for hours. Under any circumstances, the cold is intimidating. The sea takes on a gelid hardness that makes falling waves feel as if they were made of concrete. The surface becomes difficult to penetrate—a painful problem when you need to escape a wave on short notice. "Ice-cream headache" can get so intense you think you're going to faint. Hands and feet lose sensation; I have often had to ask strangers to open my car door and put the key in the ignition, my own manual dexterity having been obliterated by a frolic in the surf. The passage of time itself is distorted: a couple of long sessions in cold water, hard winds, and big waves can make two days seem like two weeks. Mark has a theory: that the sense-deprivation involved in cold-water surfing can throw the body into a state resembling insulin shock, which causes a similar distortion of time. Mark also has a rule: "For every hour you surf in San Francisco in winter, add one hour of sleep." The rule has an exception: for Dead Man's, which has an especially ferocious current, Mark says, "Add two."

We're now coming up on VFW's, where the sandbars are a mess. We've drifted about three miles: Mark is delighted. But the tide is almost high; the current seems to be slackening. We've been out for at least two hours, my hands are numb, and no amount of mashing them under cold rubber wings will bring them back to life; I'm ready to go in. Mark wants to see if we can drift all the way to the Cliff House. I'm pleased that he persuaded me to come out—I know that for the rest of the day I'll feel the sweet, subcortical rush of the more intense waves I rode, not to mention the deep calm that comes from being worked over, and chilled to the bone, and then having a hot shower—but I've got work to do. Mark is noisily scornful of this "excuse." While he plays Maynard G. Krebs, I feel like Hiram Bingham: "The decline and discontinuance of the use of the surfboard, as civilization advances . . ." But then I notice that we have stopped moving north. The windmill at the southwest corner of Golden Gate Park—a lineup marker when VFW's is big—has not moved, from our vantage point, for several minutes. Mark watches the windmill suspiciously. Finally, he says, "I never liked VFW's anyway," which is true, and we catch waves in.

We decide to hitchhike back to Sloat rather than walk. As we climb the embankment to the highway, Mark suddenly turns and says triumphantly, "Feel that? Here come the onshores." He is right. A sharp, dark wind line is already moving into the surf on the outside bars, tearing off the tops of the waves. "Those other guys blew it," Mark crows.

Mark and Jessica live on the top floor of a khaki-colored three-story building on the Great Highway. Across the street, next to the path to the beach, is a sign that reads, "Drownings occur annually due to surf and severe undertow. Please remain on shore.—U.S. Park Police." Mark and Jessica's garage is filled to the rafters with surfboards. The last time I was in there, I found ten boards, most of them still in use. There were three bright-orange "thrusters" (a three-fin design), all shaped by Tom Eberly, a board builder in Southern California. The Eberlys ranged in length from five feet eleven inches to seven feet—they were for smaller waves, and, judging from the amount of dirty wax on their decks (wax is rubbed on the deck for traction, usually before each outing), they had all seen a lot of action. Mark's favorite all-around board at the time was a pale-red ultra-light six-six thruster, shaped by Dennis Pang, of Hawaii. One half of its predecessor ("a truly great board," Mark said sadly), lime green but otherwise identical, was also in the garage; the other half had been lost at sea after an Ocean Beach wave lip split the board in two. A yellow six-two thruster completed the quiver of small-wave boards.

Then, there was a collector's item: a seven-foot single-fin, with pink rails

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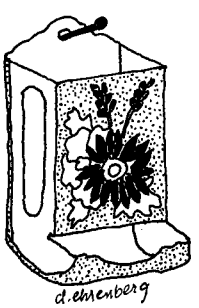
and a yellow deck, shaped and originally ridden by Mark Richards, a four-time world champion from Australia. "It's like owning Jack Nicklaus's old golf clubs," Mark said. The Richards would be instantly recognizable to any reader of surf magazines. Mark Renneker hadn't ridden it in years.

Three boards built for bigger waves were also stored in the garage: a seven-eight thruster, an eight-foot thruster, and a seven-ten thruster shaped by Ken Bradshaw, a well-known big-wave rider. The Bradshaw had a number of notches, called "wings," in the rails, and a very narrow swallowtail. It was an unusually serious surfboard, and it had been built with Sunset Beach, an unusually demanding Hawaiian big-wave spot, in mind. Both halves of a cherished seven-four Bradshaw, shattered on a big day at Sloat, were also carefully stored—"for reference," Mark said.

The garage was so full of surfboards that five more boards were standing on their tails in the stairwell. Two were museum pieces: enormous round-nosed designs from before the revolution in shaping, in the late nineteen-sixties. Mark had almost never ridden them. Then, there was a wooden board. Virtually all modern surfboards are constructed of the same materials—a core of polyurethane foam wrapped in lightweight fibreglass—but this board, shaped by Bob Chatfield, of Santa Cruz, was made of teak, with a mahogany veneer. Mark had had it custom-built for surfing a favorite spot in Big Sur, and it was the best-looking board he owned—that was one reason it stood in the stairwell—but it was really too heavy for high-performance riding. Finally, there were two boards for days of the kind that Mark likes to call "epic." One was a nine-foot-six-inch single-fin, shaped by a legendary Hawaiian board builder named Tom Parrish. The board had been made for Otis Chandler, the former publisher of the Los Angeles *Times*. Chandler is a dedicated surfer, but when the Parrish was delivered he took one look at it and, according to Mark, said, "I will never ride a wave big enough to need that board." Mark was still waiting for Ocean Beach to present him with a wave big enough to need it. The other rhino chaser in the stairwell was a breathtaking ten-foot-six-inch Bradshaw. Mark had ridden it once, on a giant day at Sunset Beach, where he found that it cut straight through the chop on the face of the waves. For that reason, he called it the Slam Dancer, and he was counting on its extreme stability for his next attempt on the Potato Patch.



Mark's study overlooks the surf. The bookshelves are filled with medical textbooks ("Cancer Epidemiology and Prevention"), nature guides ("Mexican Birds"), books on the ocean, the weather, psychology, and anthropology, and hundreds of murder mysteries. On the walls are pictures of waves, and of Mark and friends surfing—in Mexico, Portugal, Hawaii, and Big Sur as well as in San Francisco. There are fading posters for old surf movies—"The Performers," "The Glass Wall." A collection of surf magazines, going back nearly thirty years, is carefully stacked and catalogued. Mark sometimes advertises to fill the few gaps that remain in his collection, which numbers in the thousands. The desk sits in front of an ocean-facing window, so that Mark, batting out his medical papers and articles, usually with punk rock blasting on the stereo, and the weather radio barking the latest buoy data, can keep an eye on the waves.

I leaf through old surf magazines while Mark talks to Bob Wise on the telephone. Wise is suffering from a rare blood disease, and he and Mark are talking about drugs that might allow him to quit taking steroids, which are demineralizing his bones. Mark is the "health adviser"—a term he prefers to "doctor"—to dozens of surfers in and around San Francisco, but Wise is probably his most demanding advisee. Because his disease is so rare that even many hematologists have never seen it before, he and Mark have had to do a great deal of research themselves. Few, if any, other surfers think to pay Mark for his medical help, but Wise has tried over the years to keep accounts straight by selling Mark surf gear—wax, wetsuits, boards—at cost. He has also procured, from an obscure company in Texas, oversized fins for one of Mark's big-wave thrusters.

Mark hangs up and announces that Wise now has in his shop exactly the new board I need. I didn't know I needed a new board; I like the one I've got. Mark is incredulous. How can I be content with just one surfboard? And a battered, secondhand, seven-foot single-fin at that! I don't know; I just can. I have, on occasion, owned two boards—while I was living in Australia, for instance, where used boards were cheap and I was surfing intensively—but usually I've stuck with one fast, versatile board. Mark takes this as another sign of my lack of seriousness about surfing, and in a sense he's right. Most surfers can discuss board-design subtleties for hours; I've always shunned such discussions. Mark's own interest in the subject is inexhaustible, and that is part of how he comes to own so many boards. He even tinkers with the features of the boards he owns—sliding fins backward and forward, if they happen to be adjustable, or trying out experimental "boomerang" fins—and claims to be able to feel, while surfing, the effects of every minute adjustment. I, meanwhile, believe that a hydrodynamic dinner plate would probably work just as well in most situations as the finest fin made. Things happen fast and unpredictably on a wave, and the effort to trace the success of one maneuver or another to some subtle feature of board design usually strikes me as vain. I'm willing to concede that, everything else being equal, a three-fin thruster turns better than a single-fin does. But I like my board. Anyway, I'm broke.

Mark sighs impatiently. He asks if I will be coming to the horror-movie double bill tonight in the Mission District. He is a hardened horror-movie connoisseur, and he has got several other surfers into the habit lately. He calls it the San Francisco Men's Movie Club. They sit in the front row and cackle at the bad acting. I doubt if I'll be able to make it. Mark taps at the keyboard of his computer. He shakes his head. "You're funny," he says, finally.

WHAT keeps the crowds away from Ocean Beach more than anything else—more than the cold, the currents, the size of the surf—is the sheer difficulty of paddling out, of getting from shore to the waves. Most surf spots have recommended routes; many have channels where no waves break. Ocean Beach *has* channels, but

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it is an essential part of its mysto beach-break unpredictability that the channels rarely stay put. You may stand on the embankment for hours, charting where the waves are breaking, and devising a surefire course—all the water rushing in has to return to sea *somehow*, and it will presumably dig a channel along the course it takes, where fewer waves will presumably break—and then rush to paddle out there, only to find conditions so quickly changed that you never get past the shore break. On smaller days, perseverance is usually rewarded in the end, but on bigger days a percentage—sometimes all—of those who try will be defeated, washing back up on the sand in advanced states of rage, relief, and exhaustion.

On bigger days, when you're looking out from the water's edge across a stepladder of six or seven walls of cold, growling, onrushing white water, the idea of paddling out actually carries with it a whiff of lunacy. The project looks impossible, like trying to swim up a waterfall. It takes a literal leap of faith to start. You throw yourself into the icy torrent and start plowing seaward. The waves, as they approach, sound like bowling balls rumbling down a lane, and then like the crashing of pins as they slam into and roll over your bowed head and shoulders, producing instant ice-cream headache. Long, strain-filled minutes pass, little or no progress is made, and the frisky, punishing waves come on and on. Your breathing turns to gasping, then rasping, and your mind begins to play ever-shorter loops, turning over the same half-nonsensical questions: Is virtue rewarded? Is it even recorded? The fact that surfers call the white water of a broken wave "soup" suddenly rankles. This soup is cold.

Meanwhile, underneath all this aimless, half-hysterical activity, your mind struggles to detect the underlying patterns in the surf. Somewhere—upcoast, downcoast, or perhaps just beyond this next sandbar—the waves may be weaker. Somewhere, the current must be running in a more helpful direction. The best available route would be obvious from almost any other vantage—from the embankment behind the beach, or from that pelican's airborne perspective—but from down in the maelstrom, where you sometimes spend more time underwater than out in the visible world, and often get just one foam-edged breath between waves, it merely dances cruelly in the imagination: the theoretical solution to an impossibly complex problem.

And when success comes, if it comes, and you find yourself outside, beyond the breaking waves, lolling in the improbable calm, your arms limp ("noodled"), your sinuses slowly draining, your vision slowly clearing, you try to recall exactly what it was that worked, where it was that you "punched through," what patterns proved to be real. This being Ocean Beach, the channel may move within minutes, but every addition to the intuition's map of the Beach's sandbars and caprices helps.

Before the advent of the ankle leash, in the early seventies, the paddle-out at Ocean Beach was worse. Then any wave that stripped your surfboard from your hands was the end of that paddle and the beginning of a very cold swim. You often battled out to the last line of breaking waves before a big set took your board, or you fell off and lost it on your first wave of the day. Punishments are less severe today, but the paddle-out remains a great equalizer. A world-champion surfer may be subjected, on a difficult day, to the same humiliations as a surfer of middling or no talent; hence, perhaps, the infrequent appearances of world-champion surfers at Ocean Beach. Luck always plays a role, but it's ultimately secondary to local knowledge, paddling skill, strength, endurance, dauntlessness, and the ability, above all, to present the least possible resistance to obstreperous walls of soup. Mark excels in each of these categories—and also in sheer stubbornness. That is how he comes by his reputation for being able to get out at Ocean Beach when no one else can. "Doc's like Moses," Edwin Salem once told me. "The oceans just part wherever he goes."

Edwin and I were out at Sloat when he said that. It was a cold late-winter morning; there was no one else out. The surf was powerful but mediocre. Edwin and I had both got pounded while paddling out—hence our conversation about someone who has suspiciously good luck pushing through—and we were sitting outside catching our breath. The smell of fresh doughnuts drifted across the water from a bakery near Wise's shop. On the

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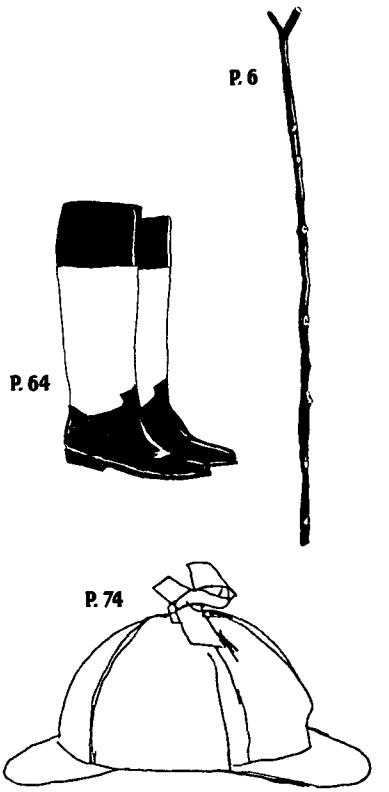

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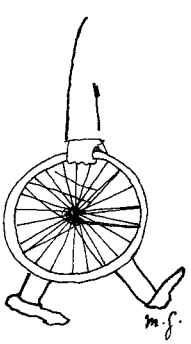
horizon, a container ship was steaming toward the Gate. Although Edwin, who is thirty-two, was born in Argentina, he learned to surf in San Francisco. He later returned to Argentina. As we began paddling back in toward the takeoff area, gliding watchfully over the swells, I asked Edwin about the surf in Argentina. He laughed. "After this place, I couldn't believe how easy it was to surf there," he said. "The water was so warm! The waves were so mellow! *There were girls on the beach!*"

ON a very big day, the city itself looks different. The streets and buildings seem glazed and remote, the lineaments of an exhausted sphere: land. The primal action is at sea. One January morning in 1984, Ocean Beach was so big that as I drove the few blocks from my apartment to the coast San Francisco might have been a ghost town. It was a dark, ugly day, drizzling and cold. The ocean was gray and brown and extremely ominous. There were no cars at Kelly's or VFW's. I headed south, driving slowly, so that I could watch the surf. It was impossible to say how big it was. Wave measurement is an inexact science at the best of times, and there was nothing—no one—out there to provide any scale. It was twenty feet, at least, probably bigger.

Sloat looked totally out of control as I pulled into the parking lot. The waves breaking farthest out were barely visible from the shore. Paddling out was unthinkable. Fred Van Dyke, an early San Francisco surfer who moved away to Hawaii, where he became a renowned big-wave rider, once wrote that surfing thirty-foot waves at Waimea Bay, on the North Shore—the North Shore of Oahu, in Hawaii, is the big-wave capital of the surfing world—was easier than surfing fifteen-foot Ocean Beach. Van Dyke mentioned only the paddle-out, but others who have ridden both Ocean Beach and the North Shore mention other factors. "The way the waves on a big day at the Beach can suddenly shift fifty or a hundred yards down the coast—that doesn't happen on the North Shore," Mike Rowbotham says. "On the North Shore, the spots are mapped out. There are established lineup markers. There are reefs and boils, and plenty of people around who know the spots cold. You're not out there by yourself among these shifting mountains of water."



There was no wind at Sloat, but the largest waves were feathering slightly anyway, from the sheer volume of water they threw forth as they broke. And the explosions of soup that followed were unnaturally white. They looked like small nuclear blasts; watching them made my stomach churn. When Mark phoned me half an hour before, he had said simply, "Sloat. Be there or be square." But Sloat was out of the question. Mark pulled into the parking lot a few minutes after I did. He turned to me and opened his eyes wide—his way of saying that the waves were even bigger than he had thought—and cackled darkly. We agreed to look at the surf on the south side of a temporary construction pier that the city had built half a mile below Sloat. As we were leaving, Edwin Salem pulled into the lot. Mark had also rousted Edwin at dawn. The three of us drove into the dunes south of Sloat.

The swell was coming from the northwest—it was being generated by a major storm in the Aleutians—so the pier, which was four or five hundred yards long, was significantly diluting the power of the surf to its immediate south. The waves there looked barely half the size of the gargantuan stuff on the north side, and almost manageable. There was still the question of getting out, however. People sometimes paddled out underneath the pier—a regular rip current, carrying water that the surf had piled up near the beach back out to sea, had dug a deep trench under the pier, so that waves rarely broke there. But it was nasty under the pier. There were loose cables dangling, and huge iron sheets sticking up at odd angles under the water, not to mention the pilings themselves, which were closely spaced and did not budge when the surf slammed you into them. I had paddled out under the pier a few times, on days when getting out at Sloat had been beyond me, but I had sworn not to do it again. In any case, even paddling out under the pier looked impossible this morning. Broken waves were rumbling through the pilings like small avalanches through an iron forest. The only non-lethal way to get out today would be to sneak past the guard on the construction project, run out on the pier, and jump off the end, which was safely outside the surf.

"Let's do it," Mark said. The three of us were now sitting in his van—a brawny, battered, trek-outfitted 1975 Dodge—parked on a dirt road just south of the pier. No one had said anything except "Oh, my God!" and "Look at *that!*" for ten minutes. I had absolutely no desire to go surfing. Fortunately, my board was inadequate for these conditions; even Edwin's eight-four "gun" didn't look big enough. Mark had two big-wave boards, both over nine feet, with him. He said that one of us could use one of them. "This is why I don't *own* a board over nine feet," Edwin said. He gave a nervous laugh. In fact, this was why most surfers didn't own a board over eight feet: it might raise the question someday of actually going out in conditions that required that much surfboard. Once, in Wise's shop, I had heard a surfer mutter, as he and his friends studied a ten-foot gun on display, "This one comes with a free pine box." The market for boards that serious was minuscule.

Mark jumped out of the van, went around to the side door, and began changing into his wetsuit. For the first time since I'd moved to San Francisco, I was ready to refuse to go out, and Mark seemed to realize it. "Come on, Edwin," he said. "We've surfed bigger waves."

They probably had, too. Mark and Edwin had a pact, informal but fierce, having to do with surfing big waves. They had been surfing together since they met, in 1978, in Argentina. After Edwin moved to San Francisco to live with his mother, Mark and Edwin became friends. They surfed together often, and Mark started taking an interest in Edwin's welfare: counselling him about how to get along in the United States, encouraging him to go to college. When Edwin passed his first semester of junior college, Mark took him out for lunch to celebrate. Edwin treasured Mark's foster-paternal guidance, which came to include a running pep talk on the subject of big-wave surfing. Over time, Mark persuaded Edwin that he was capable of surfing much larger waves than he thought he was. Edwin had the physical equipment for big waves; he was powerfully built, a strong swimmer, a

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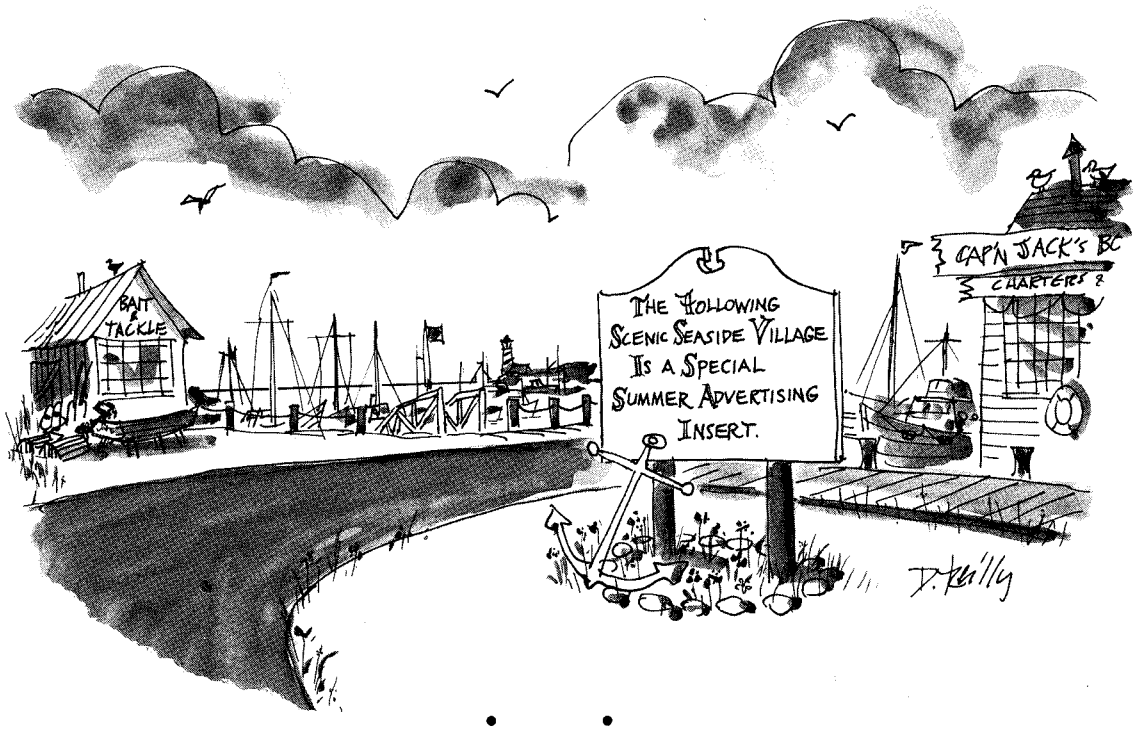

good surfer. He also had steady nerves, and a major endowment of youthful blitheness. Finally, there was the fact that he trusted—even worshipped—Mark. That made him an ideal apprentice in a program that, over several winters, had got him out into bigger and bigger—eventually, into some very big—waves. Mark and Edwin's pact consisted mainly of an unspoken understanding that Mark would not take Edwin out on days when he would probably drown. It was the cumulative intensity of the situations they had survived together that gave their pact its fierceness.

Edwin was shaking his head lugubriously, unzipping his down-filled jacket. In most company, Edwin would make an unlikely Sancho Panza—he is over six feet tall, with curly black hair, merry green eyes, and square-jawed, leading-man looks—but it struck me, watching the two of them clamber into their wetsuits, that Mark could make any companion seem like a sidekick.

While Edwin fiddled with a leash that he was transferring from his board to the board Mark was lending him—a hefty, pale-yellow nine-six single-fin gun—Mark showed me how to use his camera. Then he took the board that he would ride—a magnificent, narrow, nine-eight three-fin—out on the dunes, methodically rubbed wax on the deck, and then did a series of deep yoga stretches, all without taking his eyes off the surf.

"Why do we do this?" Edwin asked me. His nervous laugh rose and fell.

Finally, Edwin was ready, and the two of them set off, trotting lightly past the guard's trailer, disappearing behind stacks of mammoth sewer pipe, then reappearing a minute later out on the pier, still jogging—two lithe silhouettes, their big boards dramatic against a whitish sky. Beyond the pier I could see waves breaking off Sloat where I had never seen them break before. Beyond Sloat, the ranges of gray-beige swells and white walls were a scene out of my surfing nightmares. The waves scared me even as I sat, warm and dry, in the van. I was scared, too, for Mark and Edwin. The cardinal rule of safe surfing is that one should never surf alone. But the rule is all but useless at Ocean Beach when the surf is big, because there are usually no deep-water channels from which those who are paddling out can see what is happening to those in the impact zone. In my experience, there had rarely been anyone in sight, let alone in a position to help, when things got heavy. Today, even south of the pier, everything inside the area where the biggest waves were breaking was impact zone. If either of them got into trouble, Edwin and Mark would be of no use to each other.

At the end of the pier, they climbed down a ladder, flopped on their boards, and started paddling back toward shore. Their approach gave scale to the waves, which turned out to be less monstrous than I'd imagined. When Edwin quickly took off on a meaty left, it stood up about three times his height. The wave was mud-brown and hungry-looking; I started snapping pictures. Edwin pulled into it well, but the wave suddenly lined up all the way to the pier, fifty yards north, and he was forced to straighten off. The soup exploded and engulfed him. A moment later, his board came cartwheeling out of the white water; his leash had snapped. The waves were breaking close to shore—there was no outside bar on the south side of the pier for several hundred yards—and Edwin washed in to the beach in a couple of minutes. He came chugging up the dunes, and he grinned when I told him that I'd taken several shots of his ride. "It's not too hairy out there, I don't think," he said. "Kind of closed out, maybe." He wanted to borrow the leash from my board. I gladly gave it to him. The waves looked more than kind of closed out, and it was not getting any warmer—the air temperature was in the forties—and I still didn't feel like surfing.

While Edwin started back out the pier, I noticed a tremendous set breaking on an outside bar perhaps two hundred yards to the north. With people in the water, it was now possible to say that Sloat was indeed twenty feet plus. But the set on the bar near the pier was more than gigantic—it was also phenomenally violent. The waves seemed to be turning themselves inside out as they broke, and when they paused they spat out clouds of mist—air that had been trapped inside the truck-size tubes. I had never seen anything like it before, even on the North Shore: twenty-foot spitting tubes. Edwin was gesturing to Mark, trying to show him where a set on the horizon on the south side seemed to be planning to break. The thunder of the waves under the pier drowned out the roar of the larger waves farther away, and Edwin never glanced north, where the

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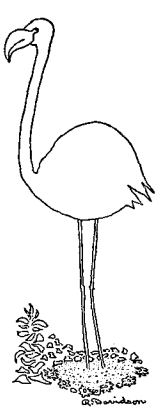
view would have stopped him cold.

Mark caught a couple of peaky ten-foot rights, both of which he made. I didn't have a good angle on the rights for shooting pictures, though. And, photographically speaking, the situation south of the pier began to deteriorate after Edwin got back out. It started raining in earnest, and Mark and Edwin, whom I could barely see through the mist, caught no waves for half an hour. I stowed Mark's camera, locked his van, and went home.

Shortly after I left, Edwin told me later, he caught another left. He made this one, but the following wave, a fifteen-foot peak that came crashing through the pier, caught him inside. His leash snapped again, but this time he did not wash in to the beach. Instead, he was seized and carried by a powerful current straight into the pier. Terrified, he fought his way through the pilings, and came out unhurt on the north side. But there the current turned seaward, and began to carry Edwin toward the outside bar—the same bar where I had seen twenty-foot tubes turning inside out and spitting. Edwin swam toward shore, but the current was far stronger than he was. He was already hundreds of yards offshore, weak with panic—but still south of the killer sandbar—when a freak fifteen-foot, deep-water set broke outside him. These were much weaker waves than the ones breaking where he was bound, so Edwin stayed on the surface and let them hit him. The set washed him to the inside edge of the rip. There he managed to swim into the path of the soup rumbling in from the killer bar, which washed him farther inside. When he reached the beach, somewhere near Sloat, he was too weak to walk.



Mark found him there. Edwin was too shaken up to drive, so Mark drove him home. I don't know whether he mentioned to Edwin what he had been doing while Edwin was fighting for his life in the water and then lying gasping on the sand, but Mark later told me that he had grown bored with the long lulls south of the pier and had paddled through to the north side. He had stayed outside the killer bar, but had caught a couple of gigantic waves at Sloat, he said, before heading back south to look for Edwin. He had been worried after he found the board he'd lent Edwin somewhere south of the pier, and very relieved when he finally found Edwin himself. Edwin, after Mark took him back to the apartment he shared with his mother, stayed on land for several days. He surfed little the rest of that winter, and I've never seen him out in very big waves again.

I ONCE asked Edwin if he had ever seen Mark scared. Edwin thought awhile, and finally said, "Once. In Argentina. We were on a train, and he seemed like he was scared of the cops, and of the Army. He had good reason to be scared, too. They were incredibly dangerous, and Doc could sense it. He could sense the repression."

When Mark talks about surfing big waves, he as often as not talks about how stress releases adrenaline, increases galvanic skin response, causes the eyes to dilate for greater acuity of vision, and causes the liver to release certain chemicals that increase endurance, certain other chemicals that decrease the perception of pain, and certain yet other chemicals that enhance fast-muscle fibres. This is not how other surfers talk about big waves. Mark says things like "Breath-holding duration is inversely proportional to energy expenditure, which means oxygen consumption." He gives the impression, in other words, that he actually knows what is going on physiologically in situations of abject terror—that he knows, say, what it really takes in the way of oxygen denial to cause a blackout. This scientific approach to the subject is, I think, essential to his ability to control fear in big surf.

Small-wave surfing and big-wave surfing are, in Mark's words, "like different sports. The timing is completely different—the distances, the emotions, the objectives." Actually, only a tiny percentage of surfers ride very big waves. Although the reasons for that seem obvious, Mark believes they're unfounded. Just as people are more afraid of cancer than of heart disease, despite the fact that heart disease kills many more people, surfers are more afraid of big waves than of small waves, despite the fact that small, crowded waves injure and kill many more surfers than big waves do. Still, big waves are scary, and the bigger they are the scarier they are.

And yet it is true that on big days at Ocean Beach the biggest waves are not necessarily the scariest waves. Mark believes that the most dangerous place at Ocean Beach is the inside bar around Quintara and Pacheco in February and March. The inside bar is a shallow sandbar that often forms about halfway between the shore and the outside lineup. Soup from the waves breaking on the outside bar "backs off," leaving the swell to stand up and break again on the inside bar. The waves on the inside bar tend to be not tall but terribly thick, and they can harbor a fantastic concentration of violence. Powerful seaward currents suck you onto the bar and, in winter, after a terrifying wave or two, usually drag you off, light-headed and choking, into deeper, safer water. But when the current that carries you to safety stops running—this has something to do with the flattening of the beach in the spring, Mark thinks—there forms what Mark calls "the Hole." "You can't go in and you can't go out," he says. "The bar becomes this maelstrom that sucks you toward it, then blasts you backward with every wave. You never get close to the trough behind the bar. It takes all your strength to dive under the waves, fight back to the surface, get a breath, and dive again. And the whole time you never move. You're just right there in the impact zone. That's the Hole."

Mark can describe a desperate struggle on the inside bar ("I could feel my body going to sleep") and its aftermath ("I was off kilter all day; I was nauseated") in metaphors that convince. He knows that a long hold-down underneath a wave automatically produces in the mind "about a thousand different great reasons to go in." He can even talk from what sounds like experience about what it feels like to panic in big waves: "Strength just drains out of you, like gas out of a hole in a tank." All these observations, of course, undermine his blithe suggestion that surfing big waves is safe.

But Mark also talks about the ocean's behavior in extreme conditions in the same scientific way that he talks about fear. When I think of him trapped on the inside bar, I imagine him formulating theories about how the Hole works, or perhaps refining his ideas

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about what really signals the transition from winter perfection to spring thuggishness at Ocean Beach. I once heard him say, in a college lecture on cancer prevention, "The goal is to replace fear with understanding. Fear is paralyzing; understanding facilitates."

When I asked Mark about his ability to keep his wits about him in big surf, to be timing wave intervals in situations where other surfers are struggling with panic, he shrugged, and offered a theory: "I've been taking hits of pure adrenaline all my life, through my asthma inhaler. So maybe I'm used to those giddy jolts that you get in acute, life-threatening situations like big waves. Maybe the fluttery sensations of the adrenal gland opening don't bother me the way they do most people."

Bob Wise says, "The only thing different about big-wave riders is that they can hold their breath longer than other people." This might be a satisfying theory for surfers wondering why they cannot handle bigger waves, but it doesn't hold in Mark's case: his lung function is permanently compromised by his asthma. On bad days, and on some big days, and on all big days when he is going out alone, he takes his asthma inhaler out in the water with him, carrying it in his wetsuit. He regularly tests his own pulmonary capacity on something called a spirometer, and he has been known to exult when his forced expiratory volume goes over eighty per cent of his forced vital capacity. Where most people see little beyond primal horror when they get very low on air, Mark sees bronchial plugs and carbon-dioxide build-up. It isn't that he doesn't understand the emotions associated with suffocation. "Faintish—paroxyic—jolting—fatiguish pangs of fear," Mark once wrote, describing an asthma attack. "Everything I see becomes a hellish, deadened autism. Asthma *is* Hell." Mark simply understands the many gradations between being a bit out of breath and being seriously out of breath. Indeed, much of asthma, he says, is psychosomatic. "Every February, when the great swells stop, my chest immediately tightens up."

Of course, no amount of scientific understanding gets you down the face of a big wave. (Isaac Newton don't surf.) In Mark's case, a lifetime of practice, physical courage, and simple athletic skill also figure. He benefits,

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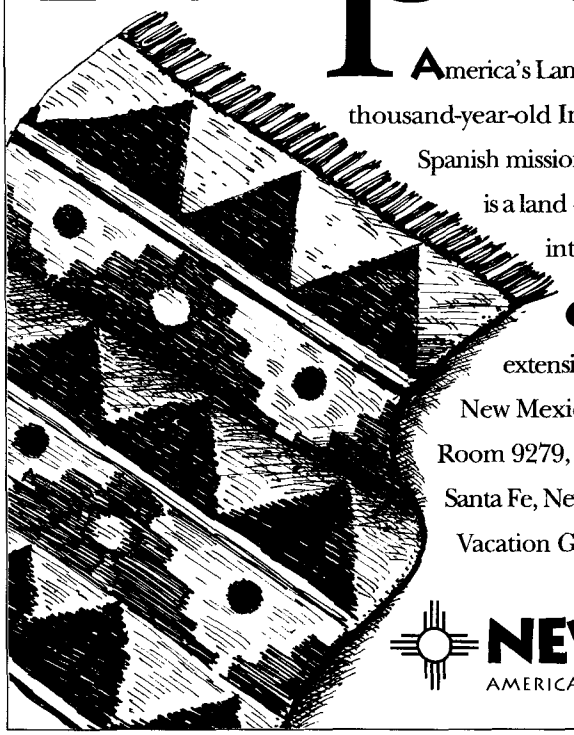

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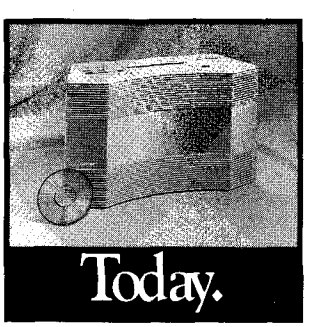

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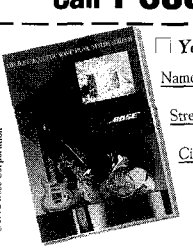

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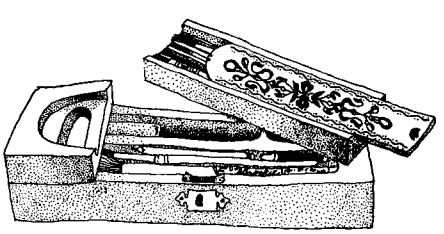
moreover, from a fair share of monkey-see, monkey-do, for he spends a couple of weeks on the North Shore each winter. Besides being an occasion to ride big, famous waves and to order surfboards from top-flight shapers, this annual trip is his chance to see the best big-wave surfers in the world go about their business. There are a handful of surfers, most of them Hawaiian, who on certain serendipitous days manage to ride very big waves in ways that expand all previous notions of what is possible. These breakthroughs occur far more often on the North Shore than anywhere else, and Mark usually returns to San Francisco inspired, keen to apply to the wild obscurity off Ocean Beach the advanced techniques being developed in the Hawaiian spotlight. His technical ardor is also, however, palpably artistic. He is helplessly drawn to the wave face, like the painter to the canvas, to write his name, again and again. Mark is not the Picasso of surfing—he doesn't have that order of talent—but he does have that order of passion, and much originality.

Geoff Booth, an Australian physician, journalist, and surfer, says, "Mark definitely has the death wish in him—some extreme driving force, which I really think only a handful of people in the world would understand. I've met one other person who had it—José Angel." José Angel was a great Hawaiian big-wave surfer who disappeared while diving for black coral off the island of Maui in 1976. "Angel was quite low key," Booth says. "He was completely rational. But he really had an aura. You could just see that he had this extraordinary drive, this *lust*—this deep, legitimate desire for absolutely huge surf."

Edwin's theory is that Mark is driven to surf big waves by the rage and futility that he feels when his patients die. Mark says that's ridiculous. Edwin's other theory is Freudian. (Edwin, remember, is from Argentina, where psychoanalysis is a middle-class religion.) "Obviously, it's erotic," he says. "That big board's his prick." I haven't run that one past Mark yet.

ON a cold, sunny January morning at Sloat, with half a dozen people out in eight-foot, high-tide glass, I'm on shore, warm and dry and taking pictures, hors de combat since tearing up my ankle in a free fall at Dead Man's two weeks before. The peak shifts south, taking the crowd along with it, and my subjects dissolve in a glittering field of light. Although I'm comfortable where I am, slumped in the passenger seat of Mark's van, I should move south with them. I drag myself into the driver's seat, start the engine, and feel, suddenly, like a kid wearing his dad's overcoat: the sleeves fall to my knees, the hem brushes the floor. Mark is actually not much bigger than I am—a couple of inches taller, perhaps—but the seat feels strangely vast, even the steering wheel seems oversized, and the van itself feels less like a car than like some high-bridged, sure-ruddered freighter as I steer it through the puddles and potholes of the Sloat parking lot. From the driver's seat, the van, its bed stacked high with beloved surfboards, seems suffused with a great, big-cat-stretching sense of power, of rangy well-being and good health. From this surf-rinsed, king-of-beasts view of the world, I think, I, too, might be inclined to evangelize.

That evening, Dr. Renneker sits cross-legged on his bed at home, watching the weather on TV while fielding a steady barrage of phone calls. What will it be like tomorrow? Do the buoy data from Point Arena justify a late-night run up to Mendocino County? Who got the biggest wave out there today? What about a movie tonight? Should "The Terminator" be admitted to the Men's Movie Club's all-time Top Ten list? Who is the most improved surfer at the Beach this winter? Mark both asks and answers these questions, but the formulations are all his. The callers are mainly local surfers. Most know each other but are friends only insofar as they connect through Mark. He teases, cajoles, and exhorts them, effortlessly issuing edicts on waves, weather, movies. The award for Most Improved Surfer is his invention, naturally, and he alone will decide who deserves it, but I can think of several guys who, even if they were to scorn it publicly, would privately treasure it. Mark loves to spin his myths of guts and glory, and many a surfer finds his way into their web. Edwin says, "If you want to hang out with Doc, you've got to play Doc's games."



Mark, still on the phone, laughs raucously, then makes a disgusted face. "Another one bites the dust," he says. "You know the rule about guys getting married: their readiness to ride big waves goes down one notch immediately. And it goes down another big notch with each kid. Most guys with three kids won't go out in waves over four feet!"

I'm reminded of what Mark said to Mike Rowbotham when Rowbotham announced that he was getting married and suggested that Mark and Jessica make it a double ceremony. "You paddle out," Mark said. "And if I see you get a good wave I'll come out." This is what surfers say to each other when they don't like the look of the waves. It neatly staved off Rowbotham's suggestion. It said nothing, though, about Mark and Jessica. I once asked Mark why they didn't get married. We were standing in a group of surfers; the others fell silent. Mark paused, then said, "I don't know her well enough yet." He chortled, giving a nasal yip that he and Jessica do identically. They had been living together, at that point, for thirteen years. The truth was that Mark was ferociously devoted to Jessica—they were more married than most married couples I know.

Rowbotham, after finishing medical school, moved to Boston to do his residency in neurology. Mark never tired of expressing his astonishment that any surfer would choose to live in Boston, so far from decent waves. But Rowbotham's move made sense to me, quite apart from professional necessity. During the years when he and Mark were constant companions, the same surfers who had given Mark the nickname Doc Hazard began referring to Rowbotham as Mini-Hazard.

It's decided: the Men's Movie Club is going to see "Friday the 13th Part V." Mark can't believe I'm not interested. How can I not be interested in sitting in the front row of some rank downtown theatre with a bunch of middle-aged guys in aloha shirts and howling as the movie blood splatters? I can't explain it. I know: I'm funny.

But then, a few weeks later, Tim Bodkin's wife, Kimberly, lets me know where I really stand. It's a fine spring morning, and I'm waxing my board on the sidewalk in front of her place

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on the Great Highway. Several surfers, also summoned by Mark, are already heading through the Taraval tunnel. Kimberly has her infant son on her hip. She's bouncing him lightly in the sunshine. (Mark has already predicted that Tim will stop surfing big Sloat next winter.) "So is the whole Doc Squad going out?" she asks me.

"The what?"

"The Doc Squad," she says. "Don't tell me you haven't heard of it. You're a charter member."

IT'S a very big late-winter day at VFW's. Tim Bodkin and Bill Bergerson—Peewee—are the only people out. From the beach, the sea is just a blinding, colorless sheet of afternoon glare, intermittently broken by the black walls of waves. Mark was out earlier. When he came in, he called it ten to twelve feet and the northbound current "a killer." A light northwest wind has come up since he left, marring the surface and rendering the waves a notch more dangerous and difficult to ride. Bodkin and Peewee are catching few waves. Most of the time, they're invisible in the glare. The waves they do manage to catch are all massive lefts, breaking on an outside bar I have rarely seen break and have never before seen ridable. I don't normally think of VFW's as a big-wave spot. On small, clean days, it's usually the most crowded stretch of the Beach. But this is the kind of day when Bob Wise says he gets a lot of phone calls from guys asking hopefully, "Is it small?" And when he tells them, "No, it's huge," they suddenly remember all the business they have in far-flung parts of the Greater Bay Area.

Eight or ten surfers watch from the seawall, nervous and grumpy. All seem to agree that the wind has ruined the surf, that there's really no reason to go out now. An unusual amount of profanity—unusual even for surfers—is being used to discuss the waves, the weather, the world. And then Edwin, who has been silently watching the ocean from behind mirrored sunglasses, erupts. "I have an idea," he announces. "Let's form a support group. I'm not going out there, because I'm *scared* to go out there. Why don't we all just say that? 'I'm not going out there, because I'm *scared* to go out there.' Come on, Domond, you say it."

Domond, a noisy tough who works in Wise's shop when he's not driving a taxicab, turns away in disgust. So Edwin addresses himself to another homeboy, known as Beeper Dave, but he also turns away, grumbling and shaking his head. Everybody then ignores Edwin, who just laughs easily and shrugs.

"Set," somebody growls. All eyes swing to the horizon, where the blazing sheet of the sea is beginning to lift in sickeningly large gray lines. "Those guys are *dead*."

IN the spring and summer, when the surf at Ocean Beach nearly always stinks, Mark heads south, to Big Sur, where his favorite spot is a reef break known as Fuller's. Fuller's is on a wild stretch of coast where west and south swells—California's summer swells—hit with unusual, open-ocean force. During a good swell, Mark will camp in his van for as long as it lasts, in a precarious turnout on Highway 1 that looks directly down on Fuller's, some seven hundred feet below. He gets up at dawn to check the waves. From the road the pattern of approaching swells is wonderfully clear—the peaky scallops of a west swell, the great stone walls of a south, silently lifting the kelp beds as they advance—but it never looks as big as it actually is. If conditions are likely to improve, Mark may curl up in his van all morning, reading a murder mystery or a medical paper, stirring his tea with a tiny fin from one of his thrusters, keeping an eye on the surf. When the waves begin to clean up, and he heads down the trail, his board under one arm, he wears a big canvas glove on his board-carrying hand—for protection against the poison oak that clogs the trailside. He carries a backpack stuffed with wetsuit, sunblock, food, beer, a spare leash, a spare fin, duct tape, a book, a knife. As he descends, the waves seem to change—growing, gathering detail, shifting with each shift of perspective. If a good set rolls through, his step quickens. At the bottom of the trail, he turns and hikes north along a narrow, bouldered beach to the base of a high, white, wispy waterfall, where he buries two cans of beer in the cold stream. He changes into his wetsuit, studying the surf from the low, dramatic angle of the left-shoulder shore break, then begins his series of stretches.

The last time I surfed Fuller's, it was big and clean, but I had a bad time. From the water, the waves make much less sense than they do from the mountain (the mountain, on the other hand, becomes, once you paddle out, a magnificent vertical triptych, with rocky, waterfall-threaded scree below, a band of arid, delicately colored brush in the middle panel, and a paradisal vision of golden grass and redwood groves rising into the sky), and I was having trouble lining it up. I had been travelling—*working*, to Mark's horror—and hadn't surfed in several weeks, so my paddling was weak, and the lost half stroke kept betraying me as I misjudged shifting peaks or got tangled in the kelp. Mark, meanwhile, was having a great time. "This kelp is *nothing*," he said. "Last year, one huge day, it started breaking out in the middle of the kelp bed. That was heavy. One year, the bed got so thick the herons started *standing* on it. They were walking across it! You could

MOTHER AT EIGHTY

You come in dream, Mother, or not at all,
distressed by drugs, scattering quips, complaining
still about the way they torture you. Married late,
you wouldn't leave the party, forced Hawaii
to its knees; I've seen the cascades of your hair,
heard the devilish laugh each suitor ducked, ricocheting
through the rooms; a wastrel girl, uncontrollable.
And press through time to take you in my arms,
to find you now, coldcocked by suffering,
baggage in a train that's plowed its way
into the dark and snowy woods, and stopped.
I see you there, my dreamer, nodding at your window,
unacknowledged, except perhaps by the spotted dog
limping in the snow, that sees you lift your head,
and trembles in your smoky, avid glance.

—CHARLIE SMITH

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practically lie down on it! This year, it's so sparse it's letting in the wind chop."

My real problem wasn't the kelp, however, or my paddling, but the crowd. It was the second day of the swell, word was out, and there had been at least a dozen people in the water all day. This was not the sort of edgy, anonymous, L.A.-freeway crowd where the hassling is silent and vicious and fights are always threatening to break out. In fact, everybody seemed to know everybody else, and spirits were conspicuously high. They just weren't about to let anybody they didn't know have any waves if they could help it. It was a strange crowd—strange because it seemed to be an even mixture of grizzled Big Sur craftsmen and rich brats down from their parents' villas in Carmel, with only Fuller's and a certain amount of outlaw attitude in common. The crowd was older and more skillful than the California average. Still, it reminded me, unhappily, of how little I normally liked my fellow-surfers. The superciliousness, self-absorption, and hostility to strangers among the Fuller's crew were highlighted, perhaps, by the beauty and drama of the place, but they were not unusual. This was a disjunction—between the natural-aesthetic glories of surfing and the ugly chauvinism of many surfers—that had distressed me since I was a kid. The patch of unconsciousness where surfing and I had met down the years helped conceal, among other things, my disaffection—my alienation from other surfers.

Of course, my high-minded distress would have been immaterial if I had been holding my own there at Fuller's. But I kept getting outpaddled, and snubbed, and the best wave I caught all morning—a beautiful double-overhead left, from the deepest part of the peak—was ruined by a local hotshot who grimly spun around and dropped in on me, delaying his first turn just long enough to stuff me under a lip, the impact of which made my ears ring for an hour. I was reduced to riding the inside, the scraps, to drifting on the shoulder watching others rip the cracking silver-green caverns of the sets.

"That board's too slow," Mark said, churning past me. I was actually riding the thruster that he had finally persuaded me to get. But Mark had recently started saying that I needed another board—a longer, narrower thruster—for bigger waves. I watched him sprint-paddle toward the peak, hooting down the line at a burly local who was tearing apart a tricky, looping white-water left. Mark was on good terms with the Fuller's crew. Among the few intrepid surfers who ventured down here from San Francisco or Santa Cruz, only two, I had heard, had ever been really accepted by the locals. Mark had sealed his status by paddling out on days when even the most stout-hearted natives stayed on the beach.

The other honorary Fuller's local was Peewee. He had been at Fuller's the day before, carving immaculate lines in big, lumpy, disorderly rights. Although Mark had been predicting, on the strength of the reports on his marine-weather radio, that the swell would clean up today, Peewee had not stayed the night. He had said he had to go to work. Peewee was a job steward in the carpenters' union. When I had seemed indecisive about whether to stay or go, he had said dryly, "Better stick around. Doc's always right."

Things didn't improve that afternoon. The wind came up, and a nasty little northwest cross-chop began to make its way through the kelp. I finally just paddled in, rinsed off in the waterfall, drank one of the stream-chilled beers, and took a nap behind a windbreak of boulders. At last, Mark came in, and we staggered up the trail in the twilight. On the highway, among a scatter of trucks and vans, shivering surfers dressed, drank beer, smoked dope, hooted. Mark went off to talk to somebody. From the passenger seat of his van I watched him disappear into the gloom. I remembered what Edwin had said when I asked if he had ever gone along on one of Mark's surf-camping trips to Mexico. He said, "No. I couldn't handle it, being someplace where I would have no idea what's happening, where I'd have to depend on Doc for everything. It's bad enough here in the city." I stared into the darkness settling on the ocean below, trying to see what the surf was doing now. Fuller's, I thought, was not a place that I had ever made mine.

AND surfing was no longer where I thought it belonged—on the sidelines of my life. Neither, however, was it stage center. It felt rampant yet usurped, displaced, half vicarious. I

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realized I had let Mark thrust himself between me and it, antically filling the foreground, haunting my dream life with his fantasies, rending my winter night's sleep with a screaming phone. In fact, surfing now seemed less connected than ever to the rest of my life. Mark wanted me to make that connection. Sometimes I thought he wanted to *be* that connection. I seemed to be content, however, to coast on his momentum, to buy the board he said I should. I even let him preside over primordial moments, his Mephistophelian cackle providing a lifeline from the yawning space of my fear in big waves to some rock face where the psychic crampons held. It was a reporter's learned passivity, this yielding to an alter ego, but on this story it was disfiguring. I hardly recognized myself in the mirror of the Doc Squad.

THE rain puddles are like small powder-blue windows scattered on the muddy farm road as I hurry down to the beach at Four Mile. It's a soft, clear morning, with not a breath of wind, and a north swell looks to have sneaked in overnight. Remarkably, there's no one around. Four Mile is a reef break in a pristine cove between San Francisco and Santa Cruz. The break isn't visible from the highway, but it's a short walk from the road to a vantage point, and the spot is popular with surfers from Santa Cruz. I have caught Four Mile good before, but have never surfed it alone. While I pick my way across a creek behind the beach, I find myself listening anxiously for howls from the hillside behind me—other surfers arriving and seeing the swell. But the only sound is a tractor chugging down long rows of Brussels sprouts that stretch away to the south.

A deep, reliable channel runs out through the middle of the cove at Four Mile; the wave is on the north side. It's a quirky right, with sections that change with the tide or with any shift in the size and direction of the swell. It can get quite big, and very spooky, but the surf this morning looks benign. I paddle out through the channel, hands stinging, and my heart starts to pound when a good-sized wave hits the outside reef, stands up—bottle-green against the pale-blue sky—pitches out, explodes, and begins to wind down the reef in fine, peeling sections. This may be the best wave I've ever seen break at Four Mile. Two more nearly as good follow, and I take deep breaths to try to control a flurry of adrenaline. Carried on the back of a swift seaward current, I reach the lineup with my hair still dry. I move along a line of broad boils, paddling slowly, watching the horizon for a set, looking for a likely takeoff spot near the head of a chunk of reef, checking my position against a cypress tree on the bluff. Still nobody in sight on shore. Just one wave, I find myself praying, just one wave.

A wave comes. It swings silently through the kelp bed, a long, tapering wall, darkening upcoast. I paddle across the grain of the water streaming toward the wave across the reef, angling to meet the hollow of a small peak ghosting across the face. For a moment, in the gully just in front of the wave, my board loses forward momentum as the water rushing off the reef sucks it back up the face. Then the wave lifts me up—I've met the steepest part of the peak, and swerved into its shoreward track—and with two hard strokes I'm aboard. It's a clean takeoff: a sudden sense of height fusing with a deep surge of speed. I hop to my feet and drive to the bottom, drawing out the turn and sensing, more than seeing, what the wave plans to do ahead—the low sun is blinding off the water looking south. Halfway through the first turn, I can feel the wave starting to stand up ahead. I change rails, bank off the lower part of the face, and start driving down the line. The first section flies past, and the wave—it's slightly overhead, and changing angle as it breaks, so that it now blocks out the sun—stands revealed: a long, steep, satiny arc curving all the way to the channel. I work my board from rail to rail for speed, trimming carefully through two more short sections. Gaining confidence that I will in fact make this wave, I start turning harder, slicing higher up the face and, when a last bowl section looms beside the channel, stalling briefly before driving through in a half crouch, my face pressed close to the glassy, rumbling, pea-green wall. The silver edge of the lip's axe flashes harmlessly past on my left. A second later, I'm coasting onto flat water, leaning into a pullout, and mindlessly shouting "My God!"

The unridden waves behind mine send me windmilling greedily back outside, but the set is over before I can reach the lineup. I resume my search for a takeoff spot, lining up the cypress tree on the crown of a forested hill farther inland. When the next set comes, a few minutes later, the wave I catch is smaller and slower than that first one, but I ride with more confidence, my board loose and quick under my feet, and the last section is again a fine, swift flourish. From that point, the session settles into a rhythm of paddling, positioning, waiting, and riding—and my recollection of this morning at Four Mile begins to blur, its colors running into other sessions, other mornings, other waves. A similar but more dramatic wave in Indonesia, for instance, bleeds into the picture. There the reef was coral and perfectly straight, making an immaculate wave, and the water was warm—the island where the wave broke straddled the equator, a hundred miles west of Sumatra—but the last section before the channel there also wrapped around luxuriously, inviting a sharp last maneuver, although on a larger scale. The same rare sense of surfeit, of leisure, also suffuses the memory of that quiet, palm-lined bay in Indonesia: if I didn't often surf it alone, neither did I worry much about getting my share of waves. There were more than enough waves to go around among the few surfers who had managed to find the place. (Later, after the surf magazines discovered it, that changed.)

The places I've surfed sometimes seem like so many beads on a memory string, a rosary of hundreds of small stereopticons, wherein multicolored waves break in amber. More often, they seem like stations on some looping, ragged pilgrimage, my wave hound's *Wanderjahre*—a long search through a fallen world for shards of a lost bliss. I tend to locate this primal bliss, both for myself and for surfing as a whole, somewhere off Waikiki. At the turn of the century, when there were half a dozen surfers in the world, they were all to be found at Waikiki. Its wide, gentle swells were the womb of modern surfing—the warm, tur-

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quoise bowl of beginning. In my own case, my family lived in Honolulu when I was a young teen-ager, and I lived in the water off Waikiki. Things on land were complicated, and Waikiki itself was by then a dense nest of skyscrapers, hucksterism, and crime, but the waves, while crowded, hadn't changed since the days when Duke Kahanamoku and Dad Center rode the "bluebirds" out at Castle Surf on great hardwood boards. And the tradewinds were the same, sweet and soft off Diamond Head. And it all made a profound impression on me, and my lasting attachment to surfing was largely forged then.

Ocean Beach is the polar opposite of Waikiki—cold, gritty, scary, not for beginners. I find beauty in it, but an utterly different, more challenging, modernist beauty. Captain Cook, when he first saw surfing, compared its effects to those of listening to music. When I think of Waikiki, I hear early classical compositions: fugues and Bach concertos, sacred music. Being out at Ocean Beach is like surfing to Mahler. This glistening morning at Four Mile has a score by Handel. That wave in Indonesia might have been composed by Mozart. Sunset Beach is pure Beethoven. Strangely, when I think of the best wave I've ever surfed—the one breaking off an uninhabited island in Fiji—I hear no music at all.

But this metaphor is about mood and memory, not about the waves themselves, which dance to an infinitely more complex tune. To someone sitting in the lineup trying to decipher the structure of a swell, the problem can, in fact, present itself musically. Are these waves approaching in 13/16 time, perhaps, with seven sets an hour, and the third wave of every second set swinging wide in a sort of minor-chord crescendo? Or is this swell one of God's jazz solos, whose structure is beyond our understanding? When the surf is very big, or in some other way humbling, such questions tend to fall away. The heightened sense of a vast, unknowable design silences the effort to understand. You feel honored simply to be out there. I've been reduced on certain magnificent days to just drifting on the shoulder, gawking at the transformation of ordinary seawater into muscled swell, into feathering urgency, into pure energy—impossibly sculpted, ecstatically edged—and, finally, into violent foam. This solitary session at Four Mile does not contain that level of grandeur. It does, however, have a sweet, jewelled quality that leaves me peering from the channel into the last, cracking section, trying to hear what oceanographers call the entrainment of air burst free as the wave breaks—millions of air bubbles collapsing into smaller and smaller bubbles, from which the entrained air finally escapes with a barely audible hiss.

The most memorable aspect of this session, however, is just that, for the longest time, no one else shows up. The waves change as the tide drops, getting smaller and breaking slightly farther out, but the wind stays down, and, for all my glancing at the bluff, no one appears. After a time, I stop glancing, and my surfing goes into a trance. My concentration is unusually good: I find I'm correctly anticipating the behavior of even the trickiest sections. More than that, I'm riding at the outer edge of my ability, recovering consistently from maneuvers that under normal circumstances would be long shots. After two hours of high-amp wailing—the only real soundtrack for aggressive surfing is, in truth, rock and roll—I realize I haven't fallen off once.

A howl from the hillside finally ends this idyll. Ten minutes later, two guys are furiously paddling out through the channel, with two more hurrying across the beach, shaking their boards and hooting like monkeys. I decide that my next wave will be my last. I catch a shoulder-high peak, driving across the inside shelf. As I near the channel, I can see the two paddlers there pause to watch me ride. Rather than coast through the last section, I bank hard off the bottom and try a showy maneuver known as a reëntry. I've been making more difficult moves all morning, but my concentration is flawed now. I fall off, and get washed through the shallows to shore.

—WILLIAM FINNEGAN

(This is the first part of a two-part article.)

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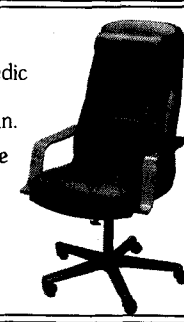

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THE DIPLOMATIC ROUND

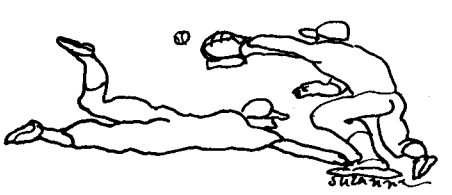
DODGING THE PROBLEM

ANY number of sober reminders and admonitions have emerged from Yugoslavia's serial horrors. They point up the limits on diplomacy, and the inability of governments to cope with the nationalism, ethnic passions, and capricious behavior that are yet again tormenting much of Europe. So thoroughly did half a century of Cold War obscure the past that all sides were surprised to see the Balkans behaving like the Balkans. Even the Yugoslavs underestimated their tested capacity for wantonly slaughtering one another.

The limits on military intervention in a crisis of this sort have also been made much clearer. The buzzwords for Yugoslavia in the Pentagon are "quagmire" and "Dien Bien Phu." Across the river, at the State Department and the White House, "tar baby" is the fashionable phrase. The sentiment reflected in such terms is strongly shared by other capitals, notably London, Paris, and Bonn. If Yugoslavia's turmoil had boiled up a few years earlier, the United States and its allies in Europe would have lost not a moment in putting troops into the area to block any Soviet move to exploit the situation. But with the Cold War gone there is no incentive to take the political risks at home that would accompany efforts to separate the combatants forcibly. Governments are fearful of a trap known as the CNN curve: a torrent of pictures of dismembered or tortured innocents could create pressure for using whatever it took to halt the violence, but then another torrent of pictures, this one of body bags containing young soldiers being unloaded in home ports, could create a reverse spin and, with it, political retribution.

Besides dodging direct involvement in the crisis, the key Western governments flouted some first principles of statecraft and diplomacy. All of them, for example, made clear what they wouldn't do in Yugoslavia, thereby surrendering the heavy advantage of ambiguity, and enlarging the political risks of actually intervening in a serious way if it became necessary to do so. Also, the interplay between major capitals and the crisis has had more to do with other, unrelated matters than with Yugoslavia itself. First came the breakup of the Soviet Union, which roughly coincided with the beginning of the end for Yugoslavia. Various Western governments did their best to discourage insurgent Soviet republics from going their own way. Washington was especially insistent, refusing to see—or, at least, acknowledge—the handwriting on the wall in either country. Yugoslavia was an annoyance, its fissiparous tendencies possibly serving as a model for nationalist forces in the Soviet Union. Mikhail Gorbachev, when he was the Soviet President, made clear his worry that outside intervention in Yugoslavia's affairs would set a bad precedent for his own turbulent country, and he thereby reinforced President George Bush's deep caution. Bush is normally loath to stray from the status quo: he was the last notable to accept Gorbachev as an agent of useful change, and the last to concede that Gorbachev had become a spent force. As for Yugoslavia, as recently as early July he called it "a hiccup," despite the "ethnic cleansing" being carried on in Bosnia and Herzegovina, not to mention the cries for help from the city of Sarajevo.

In the summer and the fall of 1991, Western Europe's attention was even more divided than Washington's, and its confusion and anxiety were greater. Besides worrying about the Soviet Union's breaking up, the major European capitals could not ignore the disaster waiting to happen on their doorstep. But what to do about it was a question for which Europeans had no good, or even partial, answers. Germany, which is separated from Yugoslavia only by Austria, has historical links with the area which are very much different from those of Britain and, especially, of France. In any event, the real distraction within the European Community was the negotiation under way to amend the 1957 Treaty of Rome and the 1987 Single European Act by creating an economic and monetary union, including a common currency by 1999, and also a more or less common foreign policy. All this was to be agreed upon, if possible, in meetings of E.C. leaders on December 9th and 10th in the Dutch city of Maastricht. There was a lot more to Maastricht, as the agreement came to be known, than met the eye. As much as anything, it involved relations between France and Germany, those old enemies who had become the axis of the E.C. The French were shocked and alarmed by Germany's unification. They reacted, or overreacted, by setting out to Gulliverize Germany—tie it down with innumerable strings. Thus, the French saw Maastricht's purpose as being to bind Germany even more securely to the E.C. and its works. Because other E.C. members saw Maastricht as the way to a stronger and better community, most of them—including France—made reaching the agreement their first priority. And no set of leaders did more to make a success of the negotiations than Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the artful, visionary, and sometimes whimsical Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who has since resigned. Briefly, differences within the E.C. over what to do about Yugoslavia would not be allowed to menace agreement at Maastricht. An Italian diplomat who was there says, "Yugoslavia got caught between Maastricht and the Soviet Union—between the processes of integration and disintegration." A senior French diplomat says the same thing, and adds, "We've all done too little and too late."



AT first, Yugoslavia was seen as a problem that Europe—the E.C.—should solve on its own. Geography argued for that, and so did history; European powers may have failed in the past to cope with turmoil in Yugoslavia, but that was before France, Britain, Italy, and, above all, Germany were cemented together institutionally. Also, since the larger part of Yugoslavia's trade was with E.C. countries, they had leverage. Or so it seemed. And, besides, the Persian Gulf conflict had been a mainly American show,

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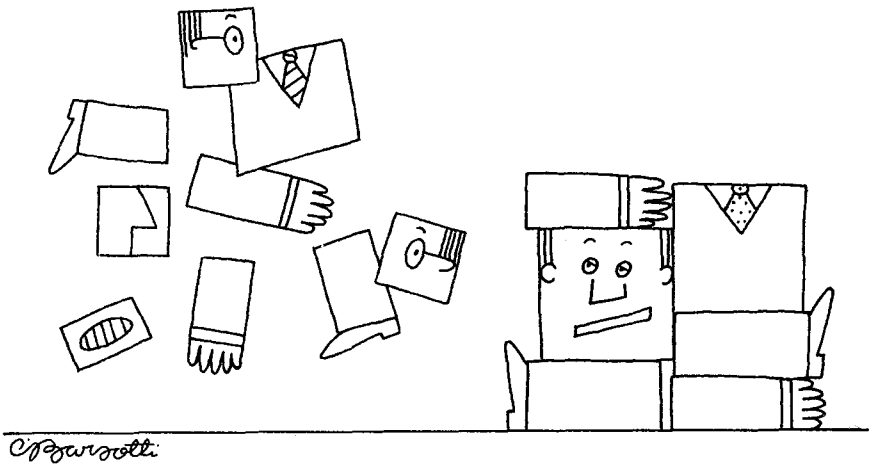
and Europeans saw the trouble in the Balkans as an opportunity for the baton to pass to them, if only temporarily. Yugoslavia, then, would become a test for a community that was segueing into a common foreign policy, or trying to.

There was no argument from Washington, where involvement in Balkan troubles seemed to carry huge risks and little chance for political gain. In addition, Washington was skirmishing with Paris over America's role in Europe now that the Soviet threat had disappeared, and the Germans were caught in the middle, with Genscher being seen by Washington as tilting toward Paris. Within the Administration, there developed an argument not just for letting the Europeans handle Yugoslavia but for pushing them to do so; Secretary of State James Baker took that line strongly. Many, if not most, senior and sub-Cabinet-level officials argued, further, that Europe would fail the test, and so would be painfully reminded of its continuing need for a strong American presence. In that light, the test would be a useful one.

That Europe would fail in Yugoslavia should have been clear to those who were charting the path to Maastricht. The test was an unduly stiff one for a community that still lacked the political cohesion required for the making of foreign policy. Some special problems in London, Paris, and Bonn lengthened the odds against success. The British shrank from Yugoslavia's ancient quarrels, which impressed them as akin to the timeless strife in Northern Ireland. And there was near-paralysis in France's decision-making process; the French could deal with the Maastricht negotiations, but not much more. There was also France's traditional tie to Serbia, which is the enemy of Croatia, one of Germany's two historical connections in Yugoslavia. (The other is Slovenia.) In short, the past contributed strongly to a heavy caution that more than offset the sense of opportunity that was felt in some E.C. capitals. One heard diplomats citing Bismarck's pronouncement on "the Eastern question": "It isn't worth the balls of one Pomeranian grenadier."

Most experts had no illusions; they feared that an explosion in Yugoslavia, unless it was handled promptly and boldly, with a little luck thrown in, could spread through the Balkans. During the winter and the early spring of 1991, working-level people at State and the Central Intelligence Agency were ringing alarm bells. But they couldn't get the attention of their principals—their "betters," to use the term that bureaucrats often apply to senior officials. Jim Baker, a man with a known aversion to losing causes, distanced himself from the issue; so did Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, who had served as Ambassador to Yugoslavia and later had done private-sector work for Yugoslavian clients. Worried diplomats at State tried to consult allies in Europe, and for a time got nowhere. "The French were altogether dismissive," one closely involved American diplomat recalls. "The British and the Germans thought we were overreacting. They weren't prepared for what happened. They could not accept that horrors of the sort going on in Somalia and Kurdistan could occur in their own back yard."



"You ought to do what I do—have a few belts before you meet with the old man."

• •

Then, as the reality set in, differences over Yugoslavia surfaced. Where to assign blame and apply pressure was the first of them. Serbia, the largest, richest, and strongest republic, was clearly bent on enlarging itself at the expense of other members of the Yugoslav federation. The cause of "a greater Serbia," which has been pursued episodically for centuries, is one to which most Serbs rally easily. Croatia, a neighboring republic to the northwest, and the second largest, was agitating for independence from the federation, and so, farther to the northwest, was Slovenia. The fault lines of major faiths run through Yugoslavia. Croats and Slovenes are Roman Catholic; the Serbs are Eastern Orthodox; Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia for short) and Kosovo are heavily Muslim. Like most post-First World War creations, Yugoslavia is a politically dysfunctional hybrid. Slovenes speak a language that the others don't understand. Serbs and Croats look at the Muslims of Bosnia, Kosovo, and Macedonia and remember the five centuries of subjugation by the Ottoman Empire.

Austria has close ties with both Slovenia and Croatia. And so do a great many Germans—Bavarians, especially. Also, half a million or more Croats reside in Germany and are well integrated. Their political voice is heard in Bonn. Blaming just the Serbs for the conflict, as the Germans were prone to do, struck the Americans, the French, and the British as misguided, if only because it might embolden Croatia and Slovenia to leave the federation. Also, Croatia's leaders seemed to be sanctioning, or even encouraging, serious abuses against the republic's Serbian minority, which numbers seven hundred thousand out of a population of four and a half million. Croatia was awarded statehood by the Nazis during the Second World War, and its past is darkened by periodic persecutions of ethnic and religious minorities. Slobodan Milosevic and Franjo Tudjman, who are the Presidents of Serbia and Croatia, respectively, are regarded by most diplomats who know them as equally odious rogues. Both were Communist Party apparatchiks. Each spotted the irreversible decline of the doctrine earlier than most, and each made a timely switch to rabid nationalism. "Both are

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aggressive nationalists," says one diplomat who has dealt with them closely. "Tudjman really takes nationalism seriously. But he is neither cunning nor deceptive. He tells you what he thinks. He is stupid, not at all clever. Milosevic is Machiavellian—a consummate liar. And he lies with extraordinary conviction. He *is* clever. Put him and Tudjman in the same room and Milosevic will take him to the cleaners. But they usually talk mainly about dividing Bosnia. They are equally ruthless and equally tolerant of atrocities. Tudjman is more overtly racist than Milosevic. Milosevic disguises his racism. They are equally representative of what is wrong with Yugoslavia."

Possibly because Tudjman and Milosevic belong to a time best forgotten, the tendency at first was to underestimate them—especially Milosevic. "None of us understood Milosevic and his nationalism," says an American diplomat, an area expert. "His mind is in the fourteenth century." That's when the Serbian medieval kingdom was conquered by the Ottoman Turks. "He is trying to close the historic circle—to re-create the Serbian state."

For a while, Western governments steered a more or less neutral course between Serbia and Croatia. Tudjman's disregard for minority rights—particularly those of Serbian communities in Croatia—and his breakaway ambitions seemed to give the conflict a two-sided flavor. But public opinion everywhere gathered behind the target of Serbian aggression—Croatia. Roman Catholics were especially wrought up, the Pope having made no secret of his sympathies. As it turned out, public opinion was closer to being right than governments were. Tudjman's scope for villainous behavior was far less than Milosevic's.

By the summer of 1991, Germany's leadership was moving away from its neutral stand (which had never been altogether convincing). Bonn worried that allies—America in particular—didn't grasp what was going on. Washington's prescription for Yugoslavia was more democracy at no cost to unity. But each of the republics except Slovenia had held elections in 1990, and without exception these events had strengthened nationalist feelings. In June of 1991, just a week before Slovenia and Croatia declared independence, Baker visited Belgrade, and in his meeting with Milosevic he strongly played the unity-cum-democracy chord. Milosevic was thought by diplomats to have misconstrued this message as a cue to hold the country together by force, since he, too, insisted on unity—but on a strictly Serbian model. "The Americans were sending the wrong signal," a German diplomat says. "The Serbs concluded that they should go ahead and get as much as they could, for eventual bargaining purposes." Another German diplomat who dealt closely with the issue says, "American policy was not pro-Serb, like France's. It was pro-Yugoslavia. But democracy there would mean a greater Serbia, because of Serbian demographic strength. We asked ourselves, 'What are the Americans talking about? Don't they know?' "

Yugoslavia had by that time become a threat not just to itself and to the rest of the Balkans but also to any pretense of a coherent post-Cold War order. Some diplomats, though perhaps not many, argued then that Baker should have been much tougher with Milosevic. And it isn't Monday-morning quarterbacking to observe that consistency is supposed to be an essential attribute of foreign policy. Baker could have told Milosevic, on Bush's behalf, that the United States and its allies had just been through an ugly experience in the Persian Gulf and had no wish to repeat it elsewhere. Without threatening the use of force, Baker could have said that unless Milosevic changed course—ceased exploiting the hatreds and passions of old—the United States might feel that it had to recognize the independence of Croatia and Slovenia and do its best to seal Serbia off from the rest of the world. A major European actor in the drama argues now that if Baker had been tough "Milosevic would have behaved better," and adds, "He would have behaved better yet if France and Britain had also been tough." At a minimum, Western capitals should have ceased making clear what they wouldn't do.

SERIOUS fighting began in June of last year in both Slovenia and Croatia. Milosevic was less committed to a campaign in Slovenia, which is separated from Serbia by Croatia and has few resident Serbs. In Croatia, however, the scale and the intensity of the violence increased sharply in midsummer. Serbia was the aggressor, but Croatia, besides fighting back, had embarked on a systematic destruction of Serbian villages and enclaves; large

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numbers of Serbs disappeared. Both groups had gone back to basics. Western governments had, of course, ruled out using force, and only the Germans showed any interest at this time in sanctions against Serbia.

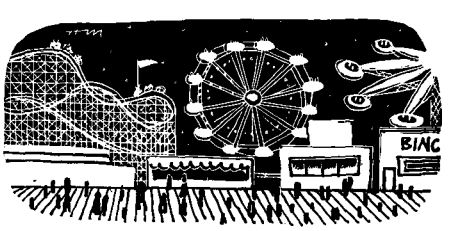
The question that Western governments did focus on was whether to recognize Croatia and Slovenia as independent states. Neither was viable on its own. Initially, no one challenged the arguments against recognizing ethnic borders and thereby encouraging other groups in Eastern Europe to take an independent, possibly explosive course. Besides, it had become clear that Milosevic and Tudjman were more than just mortal enemies; operating on another level, they were also co-conspirators, who in March of 1991 had begun planning secretly to carve up the republic of Bosnia. Whatever leverage external powers might possess seemed to lie with recognition: the threat to grant it offered leverage with Milosevic; the threat to withhold it offered leverage with Tudjman. "You don't recognize Tudjman and then put pressure on Milosevic," a Whitehall official said. "That's just silly. And how can you pressure Tudjman after you have gratified his dearest wish?"

Bosnia's leaders pleaded with Western capitals to withhold recognition of Slovenia and Croatia, fearing that if it was granted Serbs and Croats would instantly fall upon Bosnia. Macedonia, frightened of the Serbs, made the same plea. Bosnians and Macedonians argued that recognition of Croatia and Slovenia would oblige them to seek independence, too, and that, in turn, would provoke Serbia. Their safety, they said, lay in being part of a multinational state. Western capitals were well aware of the stakes; the only way to contain the fighting, they knew, was to keep it from spreading into Bosnia. Bosnia's largely defenseless people live in ethnically mixed communities, and see themselves as Bosnians rather than as members of ethnic groups. Close to half the population is Muslim; about a third is Serb; and most of the rest is Croat. The rate of intermarriage between the groups is high. Western diplomats argued that recognition should be withheld unless or until Serbs and Croats stopped fighting and agreed to leave Bosnia alone. Recognition was a card that could be played just once, and playing it early could only worsen things, most diplomats and officials felt. They knew that on May 6, 1991, Serbian and Croat surrogates of Milosevic and Tudjman had met at Graz with maps to pin down their separate shares of Bosnia. And fighting in Bosnia, besides incorporating the predictable "ethnic cleansing"—the slaughter of innocents—could have a domino effect. Kosovo would probably come next on Serbia's hit list, with Macedonia not far behind.

Taking and holding the same line on recognition was judged essential by E.C. members. First, there was the danger that if Germany broke ranks, and recognized Croatia and Slovenia, France would react by renewing its tie with Serbia, and the prospect of such "clientism"—the dark memories it would summon—was virtually unthinkable. Second, all parties reckoned that the negotiations leading to Maastricht had to be spared the burden of serious internal disputes.

In Germany, however, public support for recognition was building up. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, Germany's most influential newspaper, was for it, but Munich's *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the next most influential, opposed it. Christian Democrats were calling for recognition, but their leader, Chancellor Kohl, was listening hard to François Mitterrand, France's President, who, invoking Maastricht, got Kohl to agree that any recognition of Croatia and Slovenia would be done only by the E.C. members acting together. Yet while senior diplomats within the German Foreign Ministry opposed breaking this common front the far from predictable Genscher, their leader, was maneuvering Germany toward recognition. "There were only two arguments for it," says a Western ambassador who was in Belgrade until recently. "One was that the Serbs would be made to realize that they could not act with impunity. The second argument was German politics."

German political leaders have offered various explanations of why their government broke ranks on recognition. "People here were told only what the Serbs did, not what Tudjman did," said one of them who opposed recognition. "At first, Genscher agreed with me and those who felt as I did. Then he came under pressure from the C.D.U.-C.S.U."—the alliance of Christian Democrats. "And also from his own party"—the Free Democrats. "He zigged and zagged. We should have told them to stick together until they found a peaceful solution. We should have used sanctions to put pressure on them."



Numerous German politicians argue that, having granted self-determination to the East Germans, they could hardly do less for others seeking to go their own way. The argument causes one to wonder what the German position on other independence movements in Europe might be—in Catalonia, Corsica, and the South Tyrol, say. A major figure in the Christian Democratic alliance who took this dubious line later conceded that his government "underestimated" the consequences of recognition. "But our allies underestimated the desire for independence there," he added. "There was no good solution. The situation in the Balkans is worse than it was before the First World War."

Genscher, who surprised everyone by resigning this past May, after eighteen arduous years as Foreign Minister, looked fit and relaxed when I saw him not long afterward at his party's headquarters, in Bonn. The resort to military force by both Serbs and Croats, he noted, had dictated a change in German policy. "There were two schools of thought," he said. "One was to force the republics to stay together. The second, our position, was that the use of military force by one republic against another would set a very bad example for the successor states of the Soviet Union, some of which have nuclear weapons. Gorbachev and Eduard Shevardnadze agreed with me. I saw Gorbachev last March, and Shevardnadze was in Bonn in April."

In this conversation, Genscher invoked none of the familiar German arguments for recognition, among them an irresistible public and parliamentary tide and the moral pressure to grant self-determination. Nor did he echo Helmut Kohl's post-hoc excuse: the single-minded determination of Germany's Croat minority to have its way. I subsequently asked various officials in other European capitals and in Washington about Genscher's argument—that fighting between Yugo-

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slavian republics might inspire similar but vastly more destructive conduct in nuclear-armed breakaway Soviet republics. None of the people I asked, including one old friend and admirer of Genscher's, remembered his using this argument. I also asked two of his former colleagues in the Foreign Ministry who were involved with the Yugoslavian problem. One of them remembered Genscher's using that argument; the other did not.

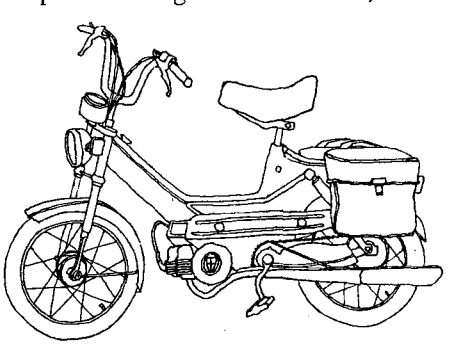
Genscher feels that his officials agreed with his position. The two whom I spoke with had not agreed with it. "I was against Genscher's haste, mainly because we needed solidarity within the E.C. going into Maastricht," one of them says. "But my wife told me it was scandalous. 'What are you doing?' she asked. 'There is slaughter and you are making resolutions.' And I had a ninety-two-year-old aunt calling and cursing me and talking about her bridge parties in Dubrovnik. This was a backyard situation for us—not so for Britain, France, and Spain."

"We working-level people tried to resist the pressures to recognize," the second official said. "We delayed the decision quite a long time here—from July to December. But Germans were the least prepared mentally for this crisis, because they are much less cynical than the French and the British. For Germans, it was unbelievable to see people killing one another as they had done in 1941. That wasn't supposed to happen—ever again. The Allies wouldn't permit it. Suddenly, this new and democratic and peaceful Europe was powerless to prevent a replay of an ancient tragedy. I, too, found it unbelievable, and I am more sophisticated than some. Recognition was seen by some as the one useful action that could be taken. We here said, 'Be careful. That could lead to civil war in Bosnia. Let's give mediation a chance.' We wanted to do nothing to endanger Carrington's efforts."

Lord Peter Carrington, a former Foreign Secretary of Britain and Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is now the chairman of Christie's, the art-auction house in London. Late last summer, he agreed to become the E.C.'s negotiator in the Yugoslavian crisis. His mandate, in effect, was to produce a constitution for a loose association of the republics. The clear understanding was that none of the republics would be recognized until a settlement of some kind had been achieved. It was Genscher who initially proposed Carrington for this role, and it was with Genscher that Carrington later found himself operating at cross-purposes. "Genscher never made clear what he was doing," says a close Genscher-watcher who has known him for many years. "It was all behind the scenes. Even his own officials didn't know why he was doing this. But his foreign policy was in trouble." That is a point others make. "He thought recognition would be a clear success, with only short-term gains and no long-term penalty. He seemed to think things would settle down after recognition, although it was obvious to anyone who knows Yugoslavia that they wouldn't."

In Washington, there is an abiding, though probably mistaken, suspicion that Genscher, who was never a Washington favorite, was playing a double game from the start. "We were urging the Croats and the Slovenes through Warren Zimmerman to stay together," a Washington-based American diplomat says. Zimmerman was the American Ambassador to Belgrade. "We discovered later that Genscher had been in daily contact with the Croatian Foreign Minister. He was encouraging the Croats to leave the federation and declare independence, while we and our allies, including the Germans, were trying to fashion a joint approach."

A German diplomat whom I asked about this charge says, "It isn't true that Genscher was playing a double game. It is true that he was on the phone every day with Croatians and Slovenes, asking them to show restraint. He knew that Milosevic and Tudjman were talking about carving up the country. He was telling them they must respect human rights and not tamper with borders. He never encouraged separation. If Tudjman had respected the rights of minorities, there would have been far less fighting, and perhaps no fighting."



Another German diplomat, one of the two who urged restraint on Genscher and tried to slow him down, sees Washington as the chief culprit. "It would have been much easier to stop the fighting between the Serbs and the Croats in Croatia than it will be to stop the fighting in Bosnia," he says. "If America had acted a year ago, we could have done a lot more." Until late this spring, the American line was that not much could be done until the parties simply tired of killing one another. Public and parliamentary opinion in Germany saw it differently: with people being killed by the thousand, how could one talk about unity and about withholding recognition from Croatia and Slovenia?

Some senior European and American diplomats, reflecting on the past year, find various points at which America and its allies—especially France and Britain—could have taken direct action. When the Serbs were reducing the Croatian city of Vukovar to rubble last November, or shelling the port city of Dubrovnik, which they had under siege, elements of the American Sixth Fleet and of the French Navy could have taken joint naval and air action against Serbian positions. British forces might also have been called on. Nothing of the sort was contemplated. The political climate discouraged joint military moves: they might have upset the Maastricht process, or so it was feared; "clientitis" had surfaced, with France feeling protective of Serbia as the German tilt toward Croatia became pronounced; and French passivity vis-à-vis the aggressor was matched by Britain's.

Another problem was the bitter and mostly childish skirmishing between Paris and Washington; their chief differences—concerning defense and the international trade negotiations that are still hung up—spilled over into other areas. Both sides seemed to prefer talking about each other—poisonously, at that—rather than to each other. Some State Department people even say that France has replaced the Soviet Union as America's chief adversary. The French respond in kind, and are not above misrepresenting American positions. The spillover effect of the quarrel has complicated Washington's relations with Bonn: the United States asks the Germans, often with a

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heavy hand, to push the French into line; the Germans, unmoved, reply that they cannot deliver France. Washington kicks us, they complain morosely, and expects us to transfer the pain to Paris.

Such steps as were taken in this period had little or no effect, and, some say, just worsened matters. During the late spring, the United Nations imposed an arms embargo on what remained of Yugoslavia, but, while it may have constrained the targets of Serbian aggression, it didn't have much effect on Serbia itself, which, according to a report by the C.I.A., will never run out of arms. Yugoslavia's arms industry is concentrated in Serbia and a Serbian-controlled sector of Bosnia. The J.N.A., as Yugoslavia's Army is known, is Europe's fifth largest, and is Serbian-run. It has substantial reserves of weapons and matériel, whereas Bosnia's overmatched forces are denied weapons by the misdirected embargo.

In November, Bosnia's President, Alija Izetbegovic, who is a Muslim, visited Bonn. He opposed recognition, convinced that it would invite Serbian and Croatian aggression against Bosnia, with an ensuing bloodbath. The German Ambassador in Belgrade also judged recognition a poor idea, and he gave Izetbegovic arguments against it to use when he saw Genscher. But, for reasons no one understands, Izetbegovic used none of them. Actually, Western diplomats find most of Yugoslavia's political chiefs hard to fathom. Unlike Milosevic and Tudjman, Izetbegovic isn't considered evil—he is, after all, a victim—but he doesn't strike diplomats as any more straightforward than the other Yugoslav leaders.

IN early December, the leaders of the E.C. at last sat down in Maastricht. Neither together nor singly had they done anything worth mentioning about Serbian aggression. Carrington had brokered a succession of ceasefires, not one of which lasted much longer than the time it took to announce it. In two full days of meetings to conclude their treaty, the E.C. leaders dealt quickly with the issue of recognizing Croatia and Slovenia. But neither the consequences of recognition nor the real problems posed by Yugoslavia ever came up in their discussions. This evasion of responsibility looked bad enough at the time to some of the diplomats who were there. In retrospect, some of them think it looks shameful.

Shortly before Maastricht, Kohl informed Mitterrand that he couldn't hold back Genscher much longer. Actually, the French had started thinking in September that recognition was probably unavoidable; the alternative, they felt, would be a split along historical lines—between the patrons of Croatia and the patrons of Serbia. Britain's leadership tacitly agreed with the French that if push came to shove it would be better to make a bad decision than to incur the split. The outline of a deal was emerging. In signing the agreement on the table at Maastricht, Helmut Kohl would be taking the biggest political risks, as the French were the first to concede. He was being asked to give up Germany's largest and most symbolic postwar achievement, the strong and stable Deutsche mark: it would be blended into a common currency that, in principle, would be controlled not by the German Bundesbank but by an E.C. central bank. Kohl's own objective at Maastricht—greater power for the European Parliament—was not acceptable to either Britain or France. Quite clearly, Genscher needed something that would play well in the German press and the Bundestag.

What he got was a deal on Croatia and Slovenia. The E.C. members agreed to recognize both republics, but insisted on postponing the actual deed until January 15th. According to a German diplomat who was at the meeting, the topic had been a major offstage presence, dominating the corridor talk. "We flirted with the idea of linking the treaty and recognition," he said. Genscher and Kohl decided against that tactic, but Britain yielded anyway. The French were more reluctant, but then they all gave up. "In order to save everyone's face, we agreed to put it off to January 15th." But they didn't object when Genscher said that Germany would take the step two days later—on December 18th.

A senior British diplomat who was there agrees that the Germans made no direct link between the treaty and

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recognition. He adds, "But just before and during the meetings on the sixteenth, they said, 'We have been helpful to you. We backed John Major when he was in some tight corners. We backed you French against the Americans on defense. You owe us something.' Everyone thought the decision to recognize was a bad idea."

Another senior British diplomat says, "The deal was that we would all wait until January 15th. Genscher agreed to that. And then, having got what he wanted, he and Kohl broke ranks on the timing. This to me was inexplicable, quite unnecessary, and disreputable."

When I asked Genscher about this breaking of ranks, he said, "We were supported from the start by Denmark, Belgium, and, to some degree, the Italians. It was agreed on December 16th that timing was left to member states. I said three times, 'Germany must be permitted to decide on recognition by December 18th. We must be allowed to do it in two days' time.' They all agreed. None of the member states criticized. It was public opinion that criticized us, not governments."

Just what was and was not agreed to on December 16th isn't clear. But recognition, instead of being the unalloyed triumph that Genscher must have counted on, has provoked remorse, controversy, and no little guilt. The E.C. will have trouble living it down.

"It was tough," says a senior German diplomat who worked closely with Genscher. "This was the first time that Germany had forced people to do what they didn't want to do. We had a few allies, not many, plus the Pope. He and Genscher met in November and had a long conversation with no witnesses present."

"We made a big mistake in not waiting until January 15th," another German diplomat says. "Genscher told the others we couldn't wait, because Kohl had told his people at home that recognition would come before Christmas."

Some European diplomats feel that by bending to the Germans on so critical an issue the French and British leaders weakened themselves, and an American official says, "The received wisdom was that Germany was in charge of the E.C."

Back in September, the E.C. had created a commission, chaired by Robert Badinter, a French justice minister and human-rights advocate, to establish criteria for recognizing breakaway Yugoslav republics. Respect for minority rights and a popular consensus for independence were among the criteria. The commission never certified Croatia as having met the minority-rights test, but E.C. governments went ahead with recognition anyway.

Certain Genscher-watchers suspect that he resigned partly because he knew that he had guessed wrong on Yugoslavia. "He had misjudged a European issue right on his doorstep," *says one of them who knows Genscher* well. A senior British diplomat says, "After recognition, Genscher went quiet and then quit." Ironically, Germany's leadership lost interest in Yugoslavia after pushing recognition past its partners. It is fair to add that before this summer none of them had shown more than occasional interest in Yugoslavia, either.

THE act of recognition by the E.C. in January followed another, more durable ceasefire in Croatia. This one had been worked out by Cyrus Vance, the former Secretary of State, who was serving as the personal envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Between October and early this year, Vance made six trips to Yugoslavia, and he worked closely with Carrington. Vance told the disputants that one, and only one, United Nations ceasefire would be negotiated—at least, by him—and it would require acceptance by the parties of a United Nations peacekeeping force in Croatia. By December, around the time of the Maastricht meeting, the pieces of Vance's deal had fallen into place, and it took effect in January.

The ceasefire was seen by many relieved Europeans and most Germans as proof that recognition had done no harm, and possibly even some good. But the real question is: Would the fighting in Bosnia have started up anyway if recognition had been withheld, as many Germans profess to believe? Or would withholding recognition have bought time in which the negotiators might have had some chance of heading off the tragedy in Bosnia and moving toward a political settlement? Carrington, according to one diplomat he worked with, felt betrayed by the E.C., the very institution that had commissioned him. "Recognition altered the whole basis," Carrington says now. "I had no leverage at all." And Vance says, "I felt the same way, just as strongly."

Independence for Croatia and Slovenia confronted the Bosnians with the bleak choice that they had sought to avoid. Trying for recognition was likely to bring on civil war; not trying

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would mean becoming part of a Serbian rump state, with "ethnic cleansing" and the expulsion of Muslims. Bosnia's Serbian-led militia, which was the only well-armed fighting force there and was strongly supported by the Yugoslavian Army, was thirsting for action. Moderate Bosnian representatives of all three communities—Muslim, Serb, and Croat—had asked the United Nations some time earlier to send in a peacekeeping force while there was still a peace to keep. The United Nations said no, on the ground that Serb and Croat militants in Bosnia, not to mention Milosevic and Tudjman, opposed the idea.

Bosnia held a referendum on independence, or tried to, in February. Muslims and Croats chose freedom, but Serbs boycotted the referendum, having already voted separately to be part of the rump Serbian-controlled state that was proclaimed in April. The E.C. and the United States recognized Bosnia in April. The fighting—and, with it, Europe's worst atrocities since the Second World War—began then, too.

With Bosnia technically independent—the term mocks reality—the issue of recognizing the former republic of Macedonia loomed up. It is complicated by contesting claims around the Balkans for control of Macedonia, which lies between Serbia and Greece. The Serbs call it South Serbia. The Bulgarians, who fought Greece and Serbia for it in the eighteen-seventies, regard Slavic Macedonia as an extension of their country. The Albanians see the western part as ethnically and culturally akin to them. Feeling runs highest in Greece, although the issue there is not possession of the land—birthplace of Aristotle and Alexander the Great—but the right to the name Macedonia, which Greeks claim as theirs, and theirs alone. The Macedonians do not feel Greek—they haven't felt so since around the sixth century—and they are now mostly Slavs and Albanians. But they do call themselves Macedonians, and intend to continue doing so.

What to do about Macedonia is another issue over which the E.C. has embarrassed itself. Of the various republics applying for recognition, only Macedonia met all the Badinter Commission's criteria. Macedonia is prevented by its constitution from making any claims on neighboring territories. It respects human rights. The Macedonian President, Kiro Gligorov, is a moderate democrat of benign intent. Western officials and diplomats who have dealt with the various Yugoslav leaders cite him as the only reliable and trustworthy one of the bunch. But Gligorov is isolated politically. Greece has blockaded his country, and he cannot borrow money anywhere. Gligorov's problem lies in the unwillingness of either the E.C. or America to provoke Greece by recognizing Macedonia. The issue arose at Maastricht, although it had not yet become current. "The Greek Foreign Minister made it a condition of signing the treaty that his interest in Macedonia be accepted," says a German figure who played a key role there. "The problem of the name came up. It is hard now to apply pressure to Greece when we agreed in those very special circumstances of December 16th to recognize its interest."

Early this summer, I asked a senior member of the British Government why the E.C. wasn't leaning on Greece. "The Greeks are major beneficiaries of E.C. membership," he said. "I am not against using pressure on them with regard to those benefits." But there was no follow-through—no pressure put on Greece from the E.C. as a body or from any of its members.

So loath to offend the Greeks is the E.C. that its public statements refer not to "the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia" but to "authorities in Skopje," the capital city. Greece, it seems, would lift its opposition to recognition if the Macedonians agreed to call themselves the Republic of Skopje. The Greeks reject various compromises—New Macedonia, for instance, and the Macedonian Republic of Skopje—that contain the name Macedonia. E.C. members seethe, but nothing happens. "It is unheard of that a society cannot name its own state," a German diplomat says. "You cannot tell Macedonians not to call themselves Macedonians." But that is happening.

The Bush Administration, seething less, fears that the pro-American, pro-NATO government of Prime Minister Constantine Mitsotakis might fall if Greece's allies showed a disregard for its strong feelings on the Macedonian issue. Its successor would probably be

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the anti-American Socialists. Even more important, the Administration isn't going to antagonize the potent and unforgiving Greek-American lobby between now and the election. "We, the U.K., are telling Macedonians, 'You should go straight to the U.N. and apply for membership,'" a British diplomat says. "We are telling them that very discreetly. Enter Washington which says to us, 'No, they mustn't do that before November 3rd.'"

The frenzy arising from the issue was captured in a recent Washington *Post* piece from Skopje: "Across Greece, banners, badges, billboards, T-shirts and a new Olympic Airways aircraft all announce that 'Macedonia is Greek.' The Athens government has imposed a 19-month jail sentence on four members of a left-wing student group who were caught distributing a pamphlet calling for the recognition of Macedonia."

Gligorov has travelled to Western capitals, warning that Serbia may use the non-recognition—that is, the non-status—of his country as a pretext for invading it. He is quoted in the *Post* piece as saying, "The E.C. and the United States should not wait for war to spread to Macedonia. If war comes here, it is going to be a Balkan war, because none of our neighbors are going to remain quiet."

Experts concur in this gloomy estimate. "Macedonia is the next Bosnia," a former ambassador to Yugoslavia says. Another former ambassador says, "A brawl there will draw in Greece, Bulgaria, and Albania." It could be touched off in any number of ways, starting, as Gligorov suggests, with an invasion by Serbia. Washington knows that Greece and Serbia have "agreed informally," in the words of a senior Bush Administration official, "to split up Macedonia." The initiative was Greek—an ill-advised one, even a stupid one, Washington thinks. Another, even more plausible scenario—a certainty, many diplomats say—is a war that starts in the neighboring republic of Kosovo. Its institutions, security forces, and media are controlled by Serbs, although Serbs constitute less than ten per cent of the population, which is overwhelmingly Albanian Muslim. The seventh-century Kingdom of Serbia was born in Kosovo, and Serbs still regard it as the cradle of their nation. Milosevic is thought to believe that his sacred mandate is to rid Kosovo of its two million Muslims, mainly by driving them into Albania. Not surprisingly, these people refuse to leave voluntarily. They want their own fully independent state—one without ties to Serbia. There the matter stands, but probably not for long. Milosevic's current tactic, a German diplomat says, is "to starve the Muslims economically and culturally." Soon, however, he is expected to begin terrorizing them with his security forces. The actual battle, many diplomats think, will be touched off by the deeply aggrieved Muslims. Their cause would almost certainly draw in Albania, even though its moderate government would like to cool the situation. Macedonia's Albanians, about a third of its population, would then join in what could become a struggle for a single Muslim state. Greece could enter the fray on Serbia's side and at that point Bulgaria, under pressure from Macedonia's Slavs, might reluctantly come in. And at some point Turkey, which has stood aloof, could feel pressed to do something about ever greater atrocities being committed against Muslims. Area experts and senior officials in various Western capitals are uniformly pessimistic. The scenario is unclear, but widespread bloodletting—far worse than Bosnia has experienced—is given high probability.

THIS spring, the overstretched and underfinanced United Nations became the venue for serious efforts to limit the violence. On May 30th, the Security Council slapped sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro, the small republic that joined Serbia in setting up the diminished Yugoslav state. The U.N.'s proscriptions are similar to those imposed on Iraq; they include a ban on trade, a freeze on foreign assets, and a halt in air traffic to and from Serbia. Denying oil to the Serbs was expected to have the heaviest impact of the various measures, but enforcing the ban has been difficult; the chief violator of the oil embargo is Romania. (Arab oil producers have needed no encouragement to stay in line, given Serbia's treatment of Muslims.) Washington and London wanted the sanctions to include the denial of successor status to the Yugoslav rump state—that is, acceptance by the world community of its right to take over the seats in the U.N. and other international bodies which had been held by federal Yugoslavia. By casting doubt on the legitimacy of the regime, this measure was considered by diplomats to be the most punitive of the various steps. But France, which didn't favor applying tough sanctions against Serbia, insisted on excluding the no-successor-state measure as its price for going along with the rest of the package. China was expected to abstain, and did. The question mark was Russia, Serbia's fellow Slavic state, co-religionary, and nominal sympathizer. Russian diplomats had been lobbying in support of Serbia's position in Bosnia virtually up to the very day of the vote in the Security Council. Abstention was seen as the best to be hoped for from the Russians. Instead, they voted for sanctions—a courageous move, and one that brought Boris Yeltsin, Russia's President, nothing at home but censure from hard-line nationalists and their allies in the Russian military.

Although the French may have been lukewarm, at most, about sanctions, they were glad to see the action on Yugoslavia shifting to the U.N. With the problem becoming more acute, more would have to be done about it, but just what was unclear. Still, whatever happened, France could expect American influence to be less pronounced in the U.N. setting than in, say, an effort by NATO to deal with Yugoslavia. The Americans and the French, doubtless to the surprise of each, suddenly became the chief advocates of doing more, or of being seen as doing more, about the problem. But the two also appeared to be competing for lead position. "Coordinating French and American activities is a serious problem, and will have to be run by the Security Council," a senior British official said in early July. Certainly American passivity had until then exceeded even Europe's. On May 19th, Margaret Tutwiler, the State Department spokesperson, had said that she was "not aware of" any American security interest at stake in Yugoslavia. The remark sent a *frisson* through the foreign-policy community, both because of its gratuitous nature and because it roughly coincided with horrifying television pictures of people killed by artillery fire on the streets of Sarajevo. Washington found itself well behind the CNN curve, and Baker abruptly began to deplore the lack of action aimed at

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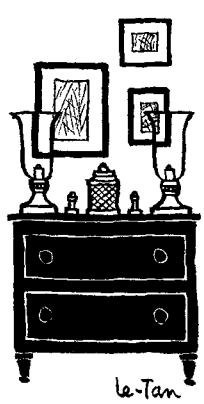
curbing the violence. At a NATO meeting held in Lisbon on May 24th, he exhorted European leaders to do more about the problem. A week later, the Security Council, behind a strong American lead, adopted the sanctions package.

Washington's exhortation and tough talk irritated Europeans—especially the French, since they knew that the Bush Administration was unwilling to take risks in Yugoslavia. Washington could reply that Europeans had wanted to handle this neighborhood problem and yet had done little besides support an American initiative on sanctions. Then a very different sort of initiative was suddenly taken, this one by François Mitterrand: on June 28th, he flew into and out of the isolated, beleaguered city of Sarajevo, virtually alone, with no entourage and in an airplane that was damaged by small-arms fire as it left the city. The trip was officially described as a means of dramatizing Sarajevo's need for humanitarian aid. Mitterrand's timing was characteristically choice—the anniversary of the assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand in Sarajevo, in 1914. The secrecy was immaculate; Mitterrand has few, if any, peers in the art of disguising intentions. That very morning, he had breakfasted in Lisbon and chatted with fellow-leaders during the windup of a two-day E.C. summit meeting. He confided his travel plans to none of them, thereby infuriating most of them. Britain's Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, called it "a brave act by an elderly President." Others said nothing. Washington was angry, seeing the gesture as a stunt aimed mainly at upstaging George Bush, with whom Mitterrand was scheduled to have a tête-à-tête in Munich on July 5th, just one week after his coup de théâtre. He and Bush were about to attend a meeting of the G-7—the major industrialized nations.



During most of this summer, Paris and Washington have sniped at each other's performance in the planning and execution of efforts to succor Bosnia's victims. Washington stood accused of trying to lead Europeans, as it led them during the Cold War, merely for the sake of leading. Paris was accused of interfering with planning and of acting unilaterally—of flying in supplies for Sarajevo without informing even the U.N. in advance.

What will happen next is thought to depend mainly on how far and how fast the contagion of violence spreads. In Paris and London, one hears about the need to create land corridors and zones of security to assure the provision of humanitarian assistance. "But we have no appetite for putting in ground forces," a senior British official says. No one does—least of all generals and Ministers of Defense, who raise a lot of questions. What are the rules of engagement? Where and when do you stop? Whom do you zap? In Bosnia, the most mountainous part of Yugoslavia, any serious fighting would be conducted on the ground, not in the air, and there would be no fronts. A senior Administration official asks, "How do you go about defending Bosnia, or Kosovo? Do you put in an occupation army? How big? How equipped?" The French are prepared to support humanitarian-aid efforts with ground forces provided that others do the same. "Some blond, blue-eyed boys from Iowa will have to be there, too" is a line one hears from the French.

Izetbegovic no longer wants to negotiate. He may think, probably wrongly, that the conflict will be internationalized, and that he will be on the winning side. Or he may want things to boil along so that Bosnia isn't forgotten as the fighting shifts into Kosovo or Macedonia. Izetbegovic has been accused by U.N. authorities of breaking ceasefires; also, both he and the Serbs are accused of firing on themselves in order to influence outside opinion.

Foreign Ministries are usually keen on what they call power projection—keener, by and large, than Defense Ministries. Many diplomats would like to offer Serbia a hard choice: either turn over to the U.N. the heavy weapons that you are using in Bosnia or see them destroyed in air attacks that would escalate as required and would destroy artillery positions, munitions dumps, and airfields. Washington would like to see Europeans out in front in any such initiative, although no one thinks that it would end the fighting. "Both sides are right—the minimalists and the activists—and therein lies the trag-

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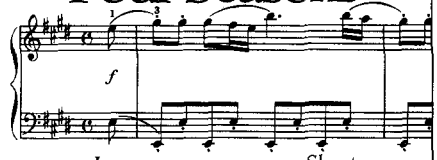

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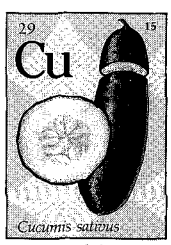

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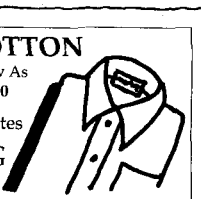

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edy," a reflective British diplomat says. "You must act, but there is little you can do safely or effectively."

Tightening the sanctions with added naval force in the Adriatic—a risk-free step that will probably be taken—is unlikely to affect matters. "The Serbs can live with and outlast the sanctions," says an American expert who feels that the die is cast. "Ethnic cleansing will go on behind any ceasefire lines."

There is some talk, though not much, at working levels about heading off still greater tragedy by putting U.N. peacekeeping forces into Kosovo and Macedonia. In the case of Kosovo, however, the Serbs would have to approve the step, since the territory is technically part of Serbia.

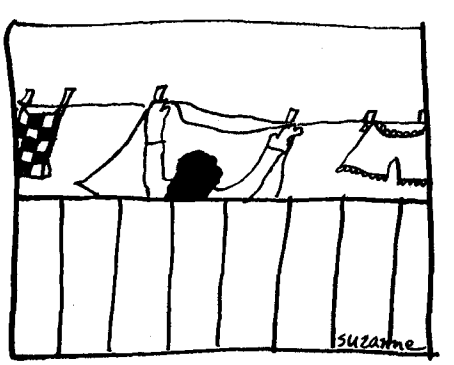
Events in recent weeks have pointed up the E.C.'s embarrassed passivity and confusion. In Washington, the Bush Administration tried to obscure its own passivity and uncertainty by talking a tougher game than it was prepared to play. According to the *Times*, Baker told Republican senators at the end of July—shortly before he left State to head the President's reëlection campaign—that European foot-dragging had held back American policy. And Bush, who in early June announced that "we're not the world's policemen," was described in early August as pushing for a U.N. resolution authorizing the use of military force to deliver humanitarian aid to Bosnians who needed it. The world must do "whatever it takes," he said.

On Thursday, August 13th, the Security Council adopted the resolution; it called for "all measures necessary" to deliver food and medicine to besieged Bosnians. Over the previous weekend, the French and the British had taken strong exception to an American draft that struck them as too broad—as going beyond insuring the supply of humanitarian aid, and as more of a reaction to the Presidential campaign of Governor Bill Clinton than to political realities. These realities include serious reservations within the U.N., starting with Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and some of his agencies, about using force to accomplish its mission. The fear is that punitive military measures such as air strikes against Serbian positions would invite Serbian attacks against U.N. forces. Put differently, the U.N. would find itself unable to carry on peacekeeping missions in Croatia and Bosnia if Serbia turned hostile. Also, Boutros-Ghali doesn't hide his feeling that far too many of the U.N.'s resources are being consumed by a European war that Europeans could and should do more about settling.

How to put serious pressure on the Serbs without losing the U.N.? No one has an answer to that question, let alone to what the resolution's key phrase—"all measures necessary"—might amount to. I asked an American diplomat about these measures just before the resolution was adopted. "We hope we don't have to use them," he said. "We don't have a plan for implementing the language. We are counting on the U.N. to do it." The conversation had a circular quality; when I noted that the U.N. was opposed to punitive actions, this diplomat said, "Yes, but the relief supplies aren't getting in."

With hindsight, some European diplomats reproach everyone, including themselves, for not isolating Serbia politically and economically last summer. By June or July, they say, Western governments had every reason to do that. Since then, it appears, Milosevic has lost any respect he had for Western leadership. He got what he wanted, and heard only windy rhetoric from abroad. "Serbia is a nation gone mad," a German expert says. "They are on a path to self-destruction. They are cutting themselves off from Europe. There could be civil war there. For many Serbs, it is 1941, the alternatives victory or martyrdom. In the end, theirs will be the greatest tragedy."

If Mitterrand's fugitive passage to Sarajevo did nothing else, it dissolved France's lingering and embarrassing link with Serbia. He didn't go to Belgrade. Milosevic suddenly found himself isolated politically. And Tudjman, I'm told by someone who deals with him, has convinced himself that the Serbs are losing the will to fight—a judgment that is not widely shared. So Tudjman is in a belligerent mood, and may be preparing to launch a fight to regain the chunk of Croatia that he lost to Serbia last year.



A senior American diplomat worries that neighboring Balkan states may fish these troubled waters. He told me that Greece has moved troops close to the Macedonian border, and Albania has put forces on its border with Kosovo. Bulgaria has done nothing yet. In measured terms, Washington has been admonishing governments in the area not to interfere in the affairs of the Yugoslav republics. With Britain having taken over the Presidency of the E.C. for a six-month period starting on July 1st, I asked a senior official in Whitehall whether his government, on behalf of the E.C., was issuing similar warnings. "We don't think it is necessary," he replied. "Hungary, we feel, is O.K. The U.N. sanctions are being broadly observed"—a flabby characterization. "The Yugoslavs do not need others to fish troubled waters. They are doing enough harm to themselves by themselves." The remark struck me as being detached from the threat to Europe's stability—as, indeed, a metaphor for the E.C.'s performance throughout the Yugoslav crisis.

The E.C. has leverage with the governments in question that Washington lacks. It can offer productive ties, and even the prospect of eventual membership in the club. Whatever the reason, the E.C. isn't using its leverage. E.C. capitals and Washington don't feel strong enough politically to do much about Yugoslavia, even if they knew what to do. In Europe, the public response to Maastricht is far from encouraging. For example, three-fourths of Germans polled are opposed to giving up the D-mark. Denmark's rejection of the Maastricht treaty in a referendum shook the entire Community structure, and set off talk of a "democracy deficit"—of a confusing treaty document being forced upon unready societies. "In six short months, the E.C. has come down off its Maastricht high, and is sunk in a slough of self-doubt," the *Financial Times* of London intoned this summer.

Although America's Presidential campaign was assumed to be built around domestic issues, the world has churned up multiple crises, most conspicuously in Iraq, again, and in

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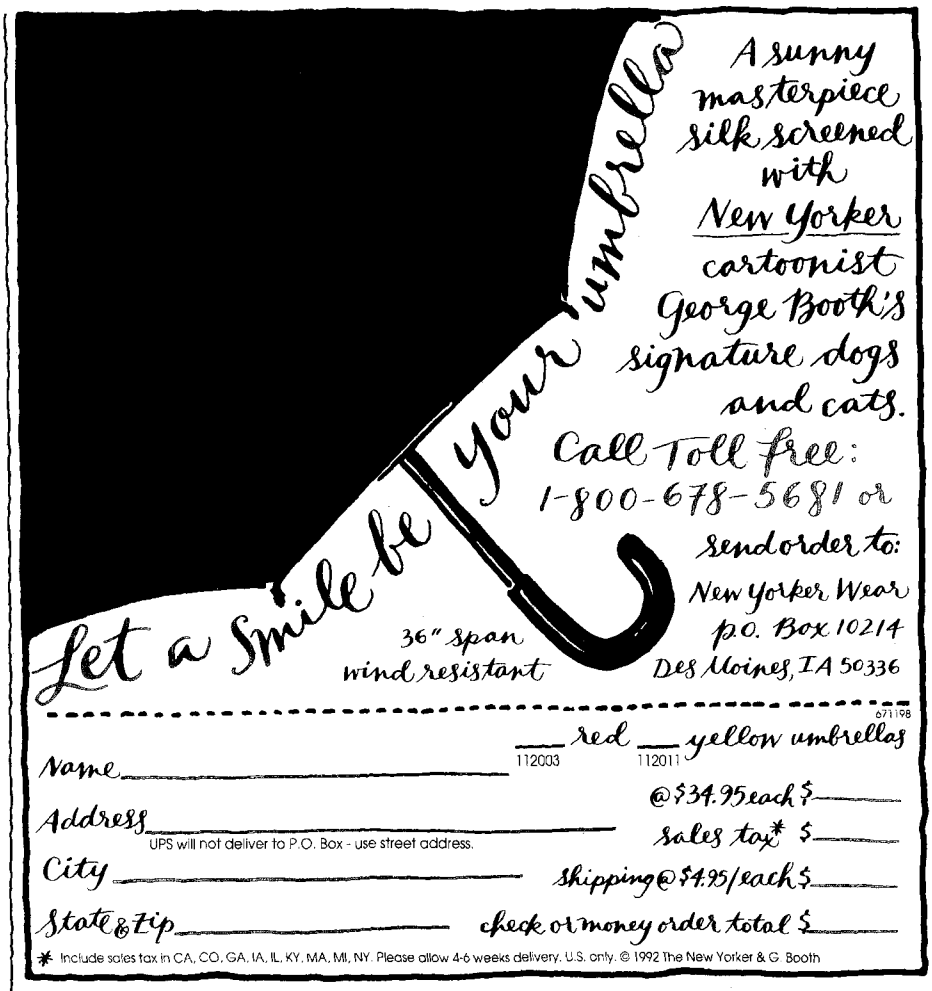
Yugoslavia. George Bush is far more comfortable dealing with Iraq, because its political outline at home is much clearer: Americans worry about Saddam Hussein and want him gone. Yugoslavia is different: any serious involvement there would pose big risks with little chance of gain. But even though Washington may see Yugoslavia as a great black hole, it does confront the Administration with awkward questions. Arabs, Turks, and other Muslims mutter about double standards, asking whether the United States, besides punishing Muslim transgressors, as in Iraq, will defend Muslim victims of aggression and violence at the hands of non-Muslims.

Saddam, who is prone to miscalculation, may see Iraq and Bosnia as linked, if only by the Middle East peace talks to which Bush and Baker are so strongly committed. "Saddam thinks we won't put him back in his box with all that is going on," a senior British diplomat says. "That would be a serious misreading of the situation." He meant that Saddam, by pressing his luck, would play into the hands of his enemies in the West. The credibility of their joint institutions—such as the E.C. and NATO, along with the overburdened U.N.—has been gravely weakened by the crisis in Yugoslavia, and the prospect of showing strength by hammering Saddam again holds a strong attraction. But Muslims ask, Why not a Desert Storm against Serbia? And there is talk—"half-serious," one diplomat says—about forming a Muslim army.

EASTERN EUROPE is a cat's cradle of ethnic and national groups that are recovering their past; menacing shadows are closer to the surface in these places than elsewhere in Europe. Most borders in Eastern Europe are recent and arbitrary. Creating new ones without having first brought contesting parties to a political settlement is, everyone agrees, a very poor idea. But the E.C. and the United States did just that by recognizing Croatia and Slovenia. The big powers talk of creating a stable world order while force is being used to change borders and to expel minorities from their homelands. "We are rewriting European geography," a wise and experienced American expert says. "We are doing this ad hoc and piece by piece. It is very dangerous." —JOHN NEWHOUSE



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DANCING

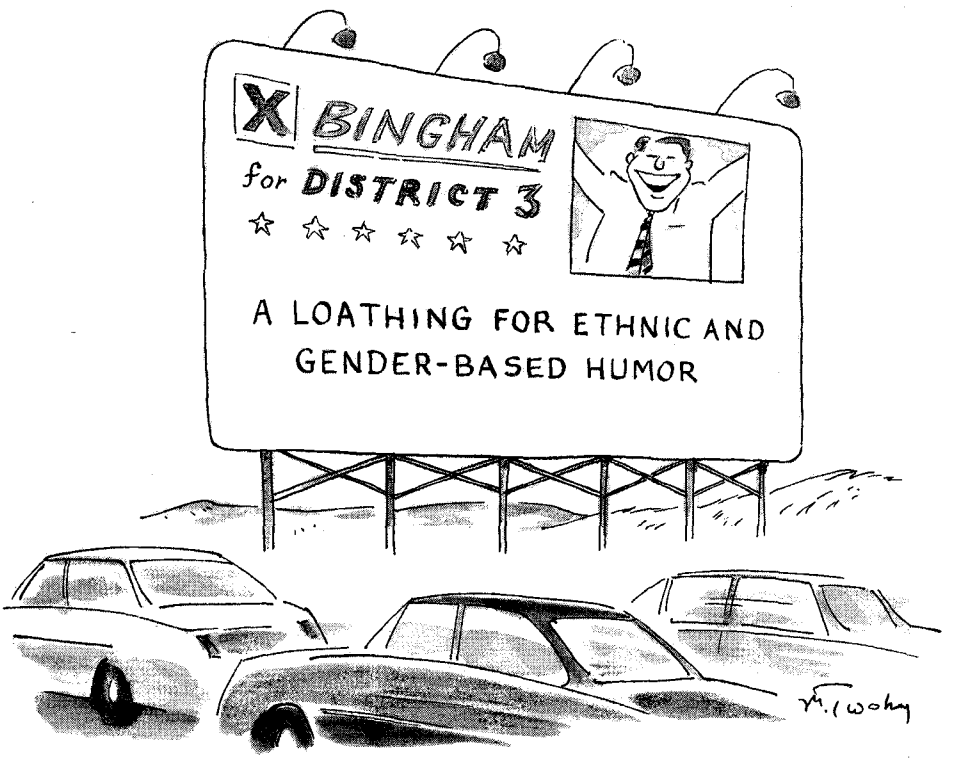
Paradise Lost

DANCING usually starts as an instinctive response to music. Just look at children: often, before they walk, they sway to a musical rhythm. Like many of the purest instincts in life, this bliss can easily slip away. Some people never again let music guide them. Others become so conscious of music that their response to it stops being natural. Then, there are those who learn—what animals have always known—to dance without musical accompaniment. How tragic, though, to see whole troupes of dancers being trained to treat music as something incidental. I've never known Glazunov's "Raymonda" or Stravinsky's "Les Noces" more thrillingly played in a theatre than at the Paris Opéra—or treated with more polite indifference than by the Opéra dancers. Most Parisians don't stray far from the beat, but dancing to music is a superficial part of their style. It interests them less than, say, how to wear a costume. The Kirov Ballet is very different. The dancers move in firm phrases, with plenty of legato. The phrases have not only flow but also pulse; other musical values, like diminuendo and sforzando, are evident. But a Kirov dance phrase has a life of its own. Frequently, it lags after a musical phrase, like a film that has fallen way out of synch with its soundtrack.

Music matters to the Kirov dancers—but not the sound of the music they're dancing to each night. The Russians refer to their legato style of dancing as "cantilena," and it parallels the portamento principles of the bel-canto tradition in Italian opera. In the last eighty years of the czars, Italian singers and dancers were ruling stars in St. Petersburg. It's likely that many of the stylistic oddities of the musicality in Russian opera houses were originally Italian. ("The Russian vocal style," Michael Scott writes in "The Record of Singing," "was provincial but retained many of the older Italian traditions—indeed long after these had been modified, even rejected, by the Italians themselves.") The Italians, I believe, disseminated what has become a characteristic device of Russian ballet—using a variation's first musical downbeat not for the dancer's first step but for her *preparation* for that step. It's a slow, Romantic technique, in which the dance appears a "felt" reaction to music, and which today is effective only with slow, Romantic scores—especially the Chopin accompaniment to "Les Sylphides." But to make that lingering style work within lighter, brisker music, you need a kind of virtuosity—as for bel canto—the Kirov no longer possesses. And you need conductors of a kind that has passed from the world. The Kirov Ballet's maestros are, mind you, fairly obliging. They slow down adagios and whip up codas to help the dancers make an effect, but they aren't able to let a phrase suddenly hover to match a performer's whim. The dancers, however, don't let that deter them. It's as if those famous Kirov coaches had been telling their charges "*You* are the music," and had packed their ears with wax to stop them from being lured off course by the siren songs of Tchaikovsky, Glazunov, Adam, et al.

Kirov ballerinas have long specialized in a bizarre trick: they dictate ever slower tempi and *then* dance more slowly than their music. Olga Spessivtseva, by all accounts, was a mistress of this; and so was Natalia Makarova—who keeps returning to the importance of cantilena in "A Dance Autobiography," but who (even ten years after she moved to the West) would fall whole seconds behind her music in "Swan Lake," ending Odette's variation to silence. Well, that was their style, and everybody who saw them soon knew it. But I was dismayed this June, during the Kirov's two-week season at the Met, to see Altynai Asylmuratova—whose musical acuity was part of what made her exciting ten or even five years ago—dance "Swan Lake" as if her smoldering charms were wasted on a petty martinet like Tchaikovsky. In one passage of "La Bayadère," when the heroine, Nikiya, is dancing a phrase twice, Asylmuratova showed, the first time, just how handsomely she could weld her dance to Minkus's music; the second time, she showed how ruthlessly she could steer her dance off it. To those of us who have watched her since 1982—when Westerners first spotted her, in Paris—it's as if the Kirov had been steadily deadening the instincts that made her remarkable.

Can you lose your musicality? Can your lose your genius? Hard to comprehend; plain to see. The way to start is by losing your spontaneity. Asylmuratova is no longer the enthrallingly inscrutable ballerina she was five years ago. Everything she does has been honed down into a series of Great Moments. Actually, she's relatively lucky, because she makes guest appearances away from the Kirov; she appeared at Covent Garden in late July



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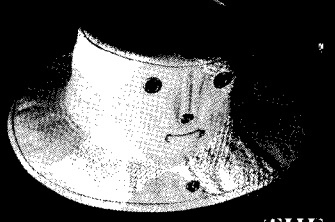
and early August, as she has occasionally done in recent seasons. In "La Bayadère," it seemed as if John Lanchbery's baton had brought her back into focus. Though she danced without the sure musico-dramatic current that once made her electrifying, her musicality can still blaze up in sudden spurts. I don't know if Asylmuratova would have been a more fulfilled artist if she'd moved West years ago. I do know, however, that today she is a far more typically Kirov artist than she used to be—and less interesting, less dramatic, and less musical.

Petersburg dancers reserve their worst manners for the scores they've had to dance a million times, especially "Swan Lake" and "The Sleeping Beauty." And not only for the scores. The Kirov's old production of "Swan Lake" had many beauties and virtues—no other staging in my experience had located the ballet so deep in the Age of Chivalry—but it was perfunctory about telling the story. What mime remained was reduced to about three gestures. Everything said to the audience, "But you know the story—so don't expect us to tell it again." Like every Soviet "Swan Lake," it added a Jester to the proceedings for little purpose other than to whip out multiple pirouettes. Still, one could watch with absorption. The first scene included Wolfgang, the old Tutor (a character in the original scenario), and no company in recent years has presented him with such dignity. When he drank too much, the episode had pathos; when he wistfully watched Prince Siegfried's departure to the lake, he seemed to sum up the whole era of adult protection that Siegfried was leaving behind. This year, the Kirov's director, Oleg Vinogradov, presented "Swan Lake" in a new production. He has kept most of the old staging's bad features and ditched its good ones: some feat. Wolfgang has been deleted; the Jester is more prominent than before.

Vinogradov has also revised the first scene's ensemble dances and provided a totally new version of the final act. These emendations are of staggering fatuity. In the first scene, the corps of male courtiers makes quite a tra-la-la about consorting with a female corps, and they dance the big waltz together. When, however, the Queen arrives and stares disdainfully at these girls, they promptly beat it. It turns out they were lowlifes. (Too shaming!) Their places are promptly filled by a second corps of women, who—though to the casual observer scarcely different from the first bunch—seem to be socially acceptable. The Queen, her snobbery appeased, then settles into her true business; namely, ogling her son Siegfried with an unnervingly incestuous fixation. (The Oedipal nature of Siegfried's psychology has long been recognized by followers of "Swan Lake"—but never before, surely, has his mother tried so hard to hog his attention.) The final scene—where the Kirov used to present a supremely elegant account of Lev Ivanov's 1895 dances—is a lot worse. Though this return to the lakeside is usually a musical hotchpotch, Vinogradov may well be the first to insert in it some of the exuberant music that we know as the accompaniment to Balanchine's "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux." (Tchaikovsky wrote it when he found that his second-cast Odile had commissioned Marius Petipa to make her a new grand pas de deux for the ballroom scene, and that Petipa had made it to Minkus music. Scrapping the Minkus, Tchaikovsky tailored his new music to Petipa's steps. One wonders if the ballerina noticed the difference.) Vinogradov uses the intrada from this pas de deux for a long, soulful, and wholly meaningless solo by Odette, addressed chiefly to the feckless Siegfried. Most of the remainder of the act is now occupied by antiphonal choreography for equal corps of white and black swans. They start their big ensemble by stretching up and down alternately. It's as if "You say potato, I say potahto" had come to "Swan Lake."

"What you people call tradition is mere slovenliness," said Mahler to the Viennese. Would that it were being said to the Petersburgers. Their sublime tradition has become appallingly decadent. Ten years ago, I would have paid just to watch the Kirov corps, after "Swan Lake" or "La Bayadère," stand and take curtain calls. The dancers would hold a single long, crescent line, from one raised arm down to the rear foot; then, as they bowed and swept that upper arm open to the side, they showed luscious harmony throughout the body. Your eye would take in details of the neck, arm, back, thigh, and foot—from all thirty-two women moving as one. Not only do they not bow that way



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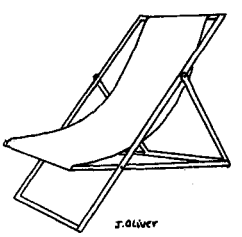
anymore; they don't even stand well. Several Kirov dancers in recent years have exhibited a gymnast-type tucked-back pelvis and arch of the waist, thus separating upper and lower body to an unsightly degree. (Asylmuratova seems to be trying to fight off this posture. You see it varying from role to role.) The stance has never been so prevalent. This, I think, is why the attack of most Kirov women is so forceful that it chops up their legato, especially in allegro; and why none of them have the light delivery or the complete turnout that in Makarova and Alla Sizova was so delectable. The nearest to that style today is Zhanna Ayupova, though her dancing this season lacked the perfection of form it had a few seasons ago. (She may still be working slowly back from pregnancy and childbirth.) Of Kirov ballerinas, she is the most fluent, impalpable, and, apparently, modest. She is the only one who draws you into her world rather than beaming that world out to you. Though she isn't much of an actress—her Odette, her Odile, and her Juliet were bafflingly alike—her stage manners are touchingly free of slickness.

No company on earth communicates, or inflicts, boredom with the grand nobility of the Kirov. Even its technical faults register like tragic flaws. When it dances modern repertory, however, it doesn't look nearly so doomed or stuffy. After its success with two Balanchine ballets, in 1989, it acquired some other American works, three of which it showed here one July night: Balanchine's "Apollo," Tudor's "The Leaves Are Fading," and Robbins's "In the Night." The evening had its problems—but they were new problems. The dancers weren't bored, and they let the music be their guide. "In the Night" was a bad choice of Robbins ballet; its intense and smoky romanticism is something the Kirov is inclined to overdo anyway. "The Leaves Are Fading," by contrast, requires a lightness, a delicacy of dynamics, and a spontaneity that could do the Kirov a power of good—but haven't yet. (With the portentous side lighting of this production, they're not likely to.) And "Apollo" wasn't helped by Yulia Makhalina's bump-and-grind account of Terpsichore's variation, or by the patchy technique in the dancing of the other two Muses (Irina Zhelonkina and Anna Polikarpova). But you couldn't miss the excitement of self-discovery. Igor Zelensky is a stolid, even thuggish, Apollo, who becomes transformed by something larger than he is—by the liveliest choreography he has ever danced. Why was the triple bill given only one performance at the Met? Because it's beneath the Kirov to spend too much time keeping up with the Joneses?



THE West inherited most of its nineteenth-century Russian ballets from the many émigrés who left home in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Our main debt to Soviet Russia comprises two ballets: "La Bayadère" and the Prokofiev "Romeo and Juliet." Leonid Lavrovsky's production of "Romeo" helped to make the Bolshoi's legend on its first Western tours, in the fifties. "La Bayadère"—or, rather, the Kingdom of the Shades scene from this full-length 1877 classic—helped, in the early sixties, to make the Kirov's. This year, the Kirov brought us both "Romeo" and the full-evening "Bayadère"; these were the season's most traditional productions with the most time-honored décor. Lavrovsky, we were being reminded, first made "Romeo" in 1940 for the Kirov, featuring Galina Ulanova. (Lavrovsky and Ulanova were transferred in 1944 to Moscow, where in 1946 they recreated "Romeo." The rest is history.) As for "Bayadère," this staging—give or take a few large chunks—is almost as old as the century.

If you came to ballet before the eighties, the "Bayadère" Shades scene—whether with the Kirov, the Royal, or American Ballet Theatre—was an overwhelming and present fact, a stark exposition of symphonic principles in pure dance. This was the parent of plotless ballet: a brave old world. Then, in 1977, the Kirov broadcast the complete ballet on British TV. The broadcast stirred memories. In 1980, Makarova staged for A.B.T. *her* complete "Bayadère"—cutting a few bars and divertissements here or there, and reconstructing the final act (which the Kirov had jettisoned long ago). She has since staged the same production for other companies, including the Royal. The rest of "Bayadère," it turns out, isn't much like any other nineteenth-century ballet and is nothing like the Shades scene. For one thing, it's "Indian." For another, much of it is less like ballet than like silent-movie melodrama. (Maybe someone in St. Petersburg knows why the Kirov mimes extensively in "La Bayadère" and minimally in the Tchaikovsky ballets.) I can see why Makarova made all the cuts she did. And why the Kirov made all the cuts *it* did. But, whatever the text, three acts of "Bayadère" amount to less than one act used to. The Kirov production certainly has impact in terms of sheer spectacular weight—the grand old painted backdrops, the quantities of performers in the huge betrothal scene, the grinding heaviness of the mime. (Some scenes look like sign language conducted by an obelisk and a pyramid.)

All that keeps you awake through a full-evening "Bayadère" is the bayadère herself, Nikiya. The sleek, lithe, and sweeping Makhalina danced the first of the two performances. As her opening-night "Swan Lake" had shown, her way of dancing, for all her talent and exciting attack, has been inflated by Kirov training. Each isolated effect was on an epic scale, but the dances were dead. Asylmuratova, in the second cast, illumined the role with her burning personal beauty and her dramatic intensity. She has been the world's leading Nikiya for some seasons now, but she isn't always the most persuasive. At a Royal Ballet matinée in early August at Covent Garden, Fiona Chadwick—a dancer devoid of glamour and lacking many of Asylmuratova's refinements of style—danced Nikiya with moving simplicity and assurance. Chadwick is a dancer who actually gains technique from using the music intimately: its dynamics inform hers. Not a Petersburg type.

You don't go to the Kirov for the scenery, yet that was the triumph of not only "Bayadère" but also "Romeo," which brings Renaissance Italy onto the stage with distinction. Lavrovsky's choreography discloses the point of several incidental details in Prokofiev's score; but the extended divertissement in the ballroom scene wastes music that, in some Western versions (notably, those by Frederick Ashton and Kenneth MacMillan), furthers the plot, to fine musical effect. Its chief merit was surely the way it prompted the Bolshoi to give such great performances. The ponderous mime and studied, hothouse dancing of today's Kirov doesn't get "Romeo" very far. In London, where

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the Bolshoi's version had had a seismic effect in 1956, many Lavrovsky features rubbed off onto MacMillan's 1965 "Romeo," which the Royal Ballet still fills with a vivid supply of speaking gesture and verismo activity, and which other companies today, including A.B.T., also keep alive. This summer, I felt closer to Ulanova & Co. at Covent Garden than with the Kirov. MacMillan's best dance material is over before the end of Act I, and what dancing there is in Act III (except the little bridal-morn dance for Juliet's six friends) has a mime emphasis. Much of Juliet's choreography—in particular, the way the upper body dominates, and is amplified by, the lower body—evokes Ulanova. There are even variations on Ulanova's biggest gesture: stretching her arms out before her with upturned palms, then sweeping the arms apart. (With various inflections, this can seem like Juliet greeting life in new-found joy or beseeching the world to cure her distress.) It's no wonder that Soviet artists—Nureyev, Makarova, Baryshnikov, and (this year) Nina Ananiashvili, Irek Mukhamedov, and Asylmuratova—are at home in MacMillan's "Romeo." It's the greatest Soviet ballet ever choreographed.

Asylmuratova has been practicing that big opening of the arms for years; it's part of what she does in her solo curtain calls. She made the most of it in the Lavrovsky, at the Met, and, seven weeks later, at Covent Garden, underplayed it in the MacMillan. But in general she was the same character—a luminous dark jewel of a girl who is enraptured by first love but for whom things go terribly wrong. This wasn't the headstrong notion of Juliet that MacMillan planned with Lynn Seymour, whose strength of will became the whole ballet's motor; and it wasn't the simple, transporting intimacy of Ulanova, either. To everyone's surprise, it resembled Fonteyn—who danced the première of MacMillan's version, in a poetically vulnerable account that is recorded on film. Asylmuratova has always had a few Fonteyn qualities about her; in this case, she—like her London Romeo, Zoltan Solymosi—may well have studied the Margot-Rudi video. Her most dazzling moment occurred in the ballroom, where she shaped certain phrases with rich rubato, playing with the music in a way that this choreography hasn't seen since the days of Seymour, Fonteyn, and Merle Park. But her regrettable tendency to take poses, acceptable enough amid the Kirov, made her look far too operatic in MacMillan's third act. Probably she'll relax into less artificial behavior if she returns to the role at Covent Garden, as she has in MacMillan's "Manon" and Ashton's "A Month in the Country." Yet each season I see her dance with the Kirov she grows less relaxed. In the seventies, one used to wish that Nureyev, Makarova, and Baryshnikov could commute between the West and Leningrad. Now Asylmuratova can do just that, and one fears what every trip home will do to her.

VINOGRADOV has been quoted as saying that the Kirov dances Balanchine better than New York City Ballet. Those of us who watched City Ballet when it was still Balanchine's company might smile at the hubris of this remark—in fact, the Kirov dances "Apollo" less well than *Miami* City Ballet—and at its misunderstanding of Balanchine. Even if Vinogradov were right that Balanchine wanted upper bodies like the Kirov's—unlikely in a choreographer so fascinated by jazz—he should see that the Balanchine style is far more advanced beneath the waist than the Kirov. And that it doesn't treat the upper body as a separate feature. At the moment, however, he's not completely wrong. During time off in their first week in New York, Kirov dancers could pop across the plaza to watch City Ballet, and some did. One was Zelensky, who joins the New York company next season. You'd think that sheer local pride would have roused the Americans to give their best in "Apollo" four days before the Kirov was due to dance it. But no. Lindsay Fischer, Heather Watts, Lourdes Lopez, and Stephanie Saland danced a wretchedly drab and arch "Apollo," and the conductor, Gordon Boelzner, was so inept that the orchestra, which played sourly throughout, fell apart during the coda. That evening, the company took "Symphony in C" to a new low. In mid-June, I watched Watts in that extraordinary pair of Stravinsky chamber pieces "Monumentum pro Gesualdo" and "Movements for Piano and Orchestra"—ballets I hadn't seen in over a dozen years. Five minutes afterward, all I could remember about what I'd just seen was technical incompetence—and all I could remember of "Monumentum" and

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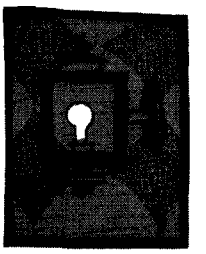
"Movements" was piercing images of Suzanne Farrell in 1979. The day before, Watts, Boelzner, and Valentina Kozlova inflicted all manner of cheap and shabby injuries on "Episodes." For reasons I don't pretend to comprehend, Darci Kistler was concentrating her energies on ballets by Robbins and Peter Martins. The divine normality of Kyra Nichols used to make her an exemplum of style; now it makes her look like a visitor from another world. The company, which is presenting a Balanchine Celebration next year (ten years after Mr. B.'s death), isn't in shape to do Mr. B. justice. Zelensky has plenty to learn about dancing Balanchine, but is City Ballet the place to learn it? He's switching from the long-decadent standards of one company to the newly decadent practice of another.



In the Cole Porter musical "Leave It to Me!" some Americans reluctantly posted to Stalinist Moscow bring jazz, swing, and the jitterbug with them. The key song, "Taking the Steps to Russia," comes to my mind as I watch today's Kirov earnestly working on Balanchine. To the Russians, classical ballet is one thing and twentieth-century popular culture another. Will they learn before the millennium that the two can be one and the same? Those who do won't be hanging around in Russia. The first principal male dancer I ever saw at City Ballet was Kirov-trained—Baryshnikov. It was during the year-and-a-bit he spent with Balanchine's company, and the evening opened with his début performance in "Donizetti Variations." This June, he returned to the company for six appearances—three performances of Balanchine's Stravinsky "Duo Concertant" and three of a new Gershwin solo by Mark Morris, "Three Preludes." These were very much guest appearances, yet they—and not the home company—were nearer to how things used to be at the State Theatre. No one ever talks about Baryshnikov's musicality, because it's so transparent. Yet his dancing made me attend to the Stravinsky as if I were hearing it for the first time, whereas only four months ago a performance had made the same dance and music seem pale and familiar to me. The Gershwin solo is a little something that Morris also dances himself. I wonder if with him, as with Baryshnikov, it evokes a quick series of American folk heroes—Mickey Mouse, Al Jolson, James Cagney, Fred Astaire. What's touching about Baryshnikov is that he's an American folk hero, too. And what's most American about this Gershwin solo is its abstract drama of the lone figure moving through space. The very air around Baryshnikov seems to keep changing throughout the dance. One of the preludes is to habanera-tango rhythm; it reminded me of the Virgil Thomson tango (a very habanera tango) that Baryshnikov danced in Morris's "Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes." That dance was one of Morris's canonic studies. The phrase with which it began—multiple pirouette, rond de jambe, développé à la seconde—used to fit right onto the music, and was such an intense pleasure that you'd think, Only with Baryshnikov! Then Robert Hill came on and began the same solo to the same musical phrase; and then Julio Bocca, too. The mood wasn't competitive. The dance simply demonstrated how much Western dancers have learned from Baryshnikov. What he learned in Leningrad has left virtually no trace in today's Kirov, but he has passed much of it on to scores of Western dancers. And roles that were made on him by such choreographers as Ashton, Robbins, Tharp, and Morris continue to challenge and stimulate his heirs. Even so, he himself is irreplaceable. And extraordinarily blithe. Dancing alone in "Three Preludes," he kept playing with the Gershwin, as carefree and as focussed as a kid with a ball.

In "Duo," Baryshnikov's partner was the young Yvonne Borree. For her the role and the occasion proved a moving self-realization. Who would have thought this soubrette soloist was brimming with such elegance and authority? That kind of surprise casting was frequent in Balanchine's day; it was one of his specialties. I'd describe "Duo" as a big leap in Borree's career—but, alas, who can tell where any City Ballet career is going these days? No one thought to follow up her success by casting her in another new role before the season ended. Borree's kind of innocent bravado is part of what lured Balanchine to America. But City Ballet is becoming a place where innocence and spontaneity are unstylish. Like the Paris Opéra. And like the Kirov.

—Alastair Macaulay

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

Tricks

GLENN CLOSE may not have given birth to Michael Douglas's baby five years ago in "Fatal Attraction," but the movie itself has spawned dozens of celluloid children: upwardly mobile thrillers that mix sex, violence, and status. Movie studios and TV networks alike picked up on the way "Fatal Attraction" provoked demographically correct adults to respond out loud, like déclassé teen-agers at slasher films. Watching Close terrify Douglas and his family in their cushy digs hit professionals where they lived. Property values and moral values got enmeshed. After Close poured acid on Douglas's car, the woman sitting behind me remarked to her date, "Well, I wouldn't do *that*."

"Fatal Attraction" has been influential not only because of its punishing sexual politics but also because of its upper-middle-class bias, its spurious attempts to generate "meaning," and its bludgeoning follow-through. The filmmakers seduced the young and the hip with an aura of chic, then pulled out all the stops, using devices from the stalk-and-kill movies this urbane crowd would never pay to see. They made the antagonist appear normal, even sympathetic, but ultimately be as vicious as Jason or Freddy Krueger. And they made the white-collar hero shrewd in the office but woefully naïve in the world of cops, grand passion, and murder.

"Fatal Attraction" yoked the strategies of suspense films, which create tension by laying out booby-trapped situations, to the shock tactics of boo movies, which simply go for jolts. An over-all portentousness was part of its social acceptability: polished enough for the snob audience, gory enough for the mass audience, the movie was also self-serious enough to get six Academy Award nominations. This year's hit thriller about an evil nanny, "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle," has been viewed as a trendsetter, but it follows the "Fatal Attraction" recipe almost to the letter, down to showing off a tastefully appointed home. So does "Unlawful Entry," which gives the homicidal-unmarried-woman role to a male cop.

LATELY, the offspring of "Fatal Attraction" have upped the level of jeopardy and violence, doubtless so they could compete with even more visceral thrillers, from Jonathan Demme's accomplished "The Silence of the Lambs" to Martin Scorsese's ludicrous "Cape Fear." In a film like Barbet Schroeder's "Single White Female," the director's calculations are embarrassingly transparent. The movie collapses so thoroughly between its promising introduction and its Grand Guignol conclusion that the target audience exits muttering about stupidity and waste. Mainly, what's wasted is the talent of two fresh, still growing stars, Bridget Fonda and Jennifer Jason Leigh, in the roles of twentyish out-of-towners scrambling to survive in New York City. Fonda, a computer expert, has broken up with her business partner before the film begins; in the opening scene, she finds out that her boyfriend (Steven Weber) has cheated on her with his ex-wife, and she dumps him. Leigh is an outwardly docile bookstore clerk who answers Fonda's ad for a roommate and immediately charms her way into the rent-controlled Upper West Side apartment by demonstrating concern for Fonda's shaky emotional state.

Virtually from the start, you know that Leigh's character plots to duplicate, at any cost, the relationship she had with her identical twin, who died in childhood. It's merely a matter of time before this unformed young lady is trying on Fonda's clothes, bearing, and hairdo and wiping out any competition for Fonda's attention. Still, the actresses are compelling. When you analyze their faces, they don't share many features (maybe the chin and the mouth), yet they're so physically committed to their roles that they merge in your mind, while maintaining identities as individuals. Fonda, a stylish businesswoman, can be the image of youthful determination, but when we first see her with Weber she has an affecting tender hopefulness—the quality Leigh will exploit. Leigh is a chameleonlike actress playing a chameleonlike woman. She's peculiarly adept at expressing furtive, inchoate emotions, and she gives her character

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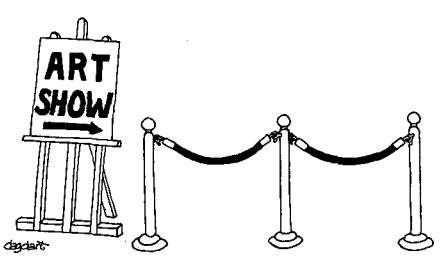
the sensory habits of a young animal: at one point, her nostrils twitch, and you realize that she's sniffing Fonda's perfume. Leigh and Fonda manage to stay in character after the action goes haywire; Leigh achieves a panicky, demonic girlishness that should be harrowing.

But when the climax of a movie is inevitable, the director shouldn't delay it as long as Schroeder does. The film is mostly a tiresome tease. The script, by Don Roos, tones up John Lutz's hackneyed novel. Roos contributes some smart, up-to-date touches, such as Fonda's regaining control over a deadbeat client by planting a hidden expiration date in the client's computer program. But he also adds hoary gimmicks, such as an accident involving a cuddly yellow Labrador puppy, and strokes that seem designed solely to get the movie talked about, ranging from an out-of-left-field crack about Kennedy wives to Leigh (disguised as Fonda) performing fellatio on Weber. The protracted finale is about as subtle and believable as a professional tag-team wrestling match. Schroeder and Roos stoop to killing off a major character and then raising him from the dead. The movie, however, never gets a second wind.

WATCHING Christopher Crowe, the writer-director of "Whispers in the Dark," grapple feebly with women's sexual desires, I was both dismayed and dumbfounded. After all, Brian De Palma treated this material with sophistication and playfulness a dozen years ago in "Dressed to Kill." Crowe pounds it out relentlessly, with a soupçon of superficial daring (most of the sex is S & M) and a nod toward vulgar feminism: the heroine is a shrink (Annabella Sciorra), and in the course of the movie she learns she is right to distrust father figures. The plot is tinged with topicality: Sciorra dates and beds a ruggedly handsome aviator (Jamey Sheridan) who happens to be connected to one of her patients—a voluptuous woman named Eve (Deborah Unger). In therapy, Eve details increasingly dangerous episodes of bondage, and her stories get Sciorra so hot that she goes back into therapy herself, with her university mentor, Alan Alda. (God! All this heavy preparation for another woman-in-jeopardy flick.) The movie's pompous trappings make its inept, desperate attention-grabbing stand out. Crowe flubs maneuvers that true horror directors know instinctively, like how to stage the heroine braining a man and not provoke the wrong kind of laughs. The whole film has a punitive feel to it. Crowe aims at a post-analytic audience while preying on its fears that the unanalyzed know better. The only character who keeps insisting that he doesn't have a buried side emerges as Mr. Right. Crowe doesn't clarify why Sciorra gets so turned on when Unger tells her sex tales. (Unger is a good actress and a ripe, fleshy sexual presence, but she's no Bibi Andersson in "Persona.") A single session with a gentle lovemaker and Sciorra is cured. The actors include Anthony LaPaglia as a hostile police detective, Jill Clayburgh as Alda's supportive wife, Anthony Heald as Sciorra's sadsack ex-lover, and John Leguizamo, who is scuzzy-scary as an unhinged artist called Fast Johnny C. The director has outwitted himself with the casting. Seasoned moviegoers will be able to spot Crowe's ace in the hole just from reading the credits.

APART from the gaps in skill and temperament, the primary difference between a De Palma film like "Dressed to Kill" and fancy schlock like "Single White Female" and "Whispers in the Dark"—and "Fatal Attraction" itself—is that De Palma is uninhibited. His spirit of uncensored fun stimulates more direct and latent responses than clamped-down shock machines, even ones with properly educated heroines. De Palma's latest, "Raising Cain," is a loony, overcalculated attempt to get back into his "Dressed to Kill"/"Carrie" mode. After the successive commercial disappointments of the great "Casualties of War" and the misbegotten "Bonfire of the Vanities," De Palma has returned to the world of tight budgets and tight corners. He has written a convoluted black comedy in which a child psychologist (John Lithgow), who is obsessive about the upbringing of his little daughter, approaches breakdown at roughly the same time that his wife (Lolita Davidovich) falls into the arms of her ex-boyfriend (Steven Bauer). Lithgow also enacts a lewd, evil twin, who does much of his brother's dirty work, *and* their weirdly intense father, who needs to procure toddlers for a study of personality development.



In "Raising Cain" De Palma is still devil-may-care about subjects that are usually treated with deathly seriousness, and he's audacious in his dislocation effects, converting what are normally flaws in a thriller—withholding information and jumping ahead of the plot—into narrative ruses that take the ground out from under a viewer's feet. But some of these flaws remain flaws. And the movie, for all its goofiness, lacks the soul of abandon that helped make De Palma's earlier suspense films wild sprees. Having misjudged his audience (and his source) spectacularly in his wishy-washy adaptation of "Bonfire," he's intent here on *playing* the audience—specifically, the devotees of Hitchcock's "Psycho" and Michael Powell's "Peeping Tom" and De Palma's own killer entertainment. The only way to enjoy the movie is to identify not with the characters but with De Palma himself as he raises and confounds expectations and scatters bits of other movies into a headlong pastiche. De Palma dares us to spot the fleeting homages to Hitchcock and Powell, to "Dressed to Kill" and "Carrie," and even to "The Untouchables" and "Potemkin." Any striking prop or composition in "Raising Cain" is apt to have a pedigree: the twin dresses in the leather look of Alan Arkin in "Wait Until Dark," and an ominous sundial is out of "The Big Clock."

De Palma knows how to knock the most savvy fans off balance. He uses flashbacks within dream sequences, and snips off several scenes at the brink of catastrophe, clarifying the crisis soon afterward. Throughout, he juggles parody and self-parody: it's as if he were excusing viewers from feeling anything deeper than a reflex, including respect. If you see the film with its ideal viewers—people who just want to scream, giggle, and jump yet have some film background—you know that De Palma has read them accurately. But his whirling dervish of activity is coarsening. Although Davidovich is the rare actress who can be at once sensual and droll, the chicanery muffles

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her talent. In her scenes De Palma tries to do in silly seconds what he did in voluptuous minutes with Angie Dickinson in "Dressed to Kill." The director doesn't allow Davidovich to express sexual desire; instead, he signals it, reducing Bauer (who was warm and dashing in De Palma's "Scarface") to a comical slab of beefcake. Lithgow has funny moments all the way through. I particularly like the lascivious smile he wears when he approaches Davidovich's bed. But the performers can't overcome the film's hermetic construction. It takes a full hour to get a grip on the wacky ground rules; up to then, it's impossible for the actors to come across with authority and for the audience to gain any real stake in the material.

The movie turns for the better when Gregg Henry and Tom Bower, as a couple of sarcastic cops, and Barton Heyman, as a wily ex-cop, start to crack the plot, sparking off each other with the casual, skit-comic humor that De Palma mastered more than twenty years ago (in "Greetings" and "Hi, Mom!"). "Cain" continues to roll when Frances Sternhagen arrives at the police station. A psychologist who used to collaborate with Lithgow's father, she gets to the heart of the mystery. Everything clicks in these scenes, from Sternhagen's delicious, cranky parody of doctorly wisdom to De Palma's directorial flourishes. Sternhagen delivers the bulk of the exposition in an unbroken travelling shot, and De Palma includes his own virtuosity in the joke: whenever Sternhagen threatens to veer out of the camera's way, Henry and Bower pull her back in. Her confrontation with Lithgow is satisfying, partly because he finally has the chance to let that character's demons loose. But the movie quickly regresses to screamland. De Palma heaps everything onto "Raising Cain" except his sensibility; it's like the shoot-the-works special at a pizza joint.

THE austerity of Mark Peploe's "Afraid of the Dark" made me yearn for De Palma's extravagance. This, too, is a trick movie, but with only one trick. In the first half, a young London boy (Ben Keyworth) follows the path of a razor slasher who's attacking blind women in his neighborhood. Then, after a bloody confrontation with the slasher, Peploe clues you in that it's the boy's hallu-

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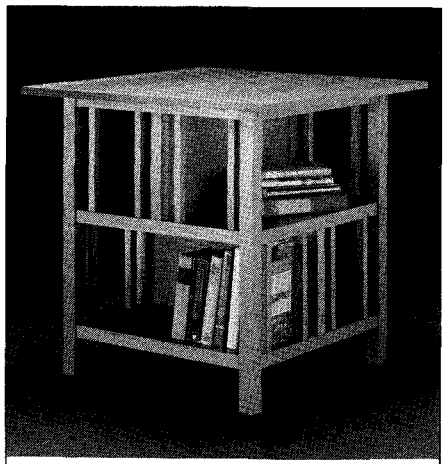

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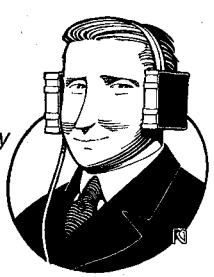

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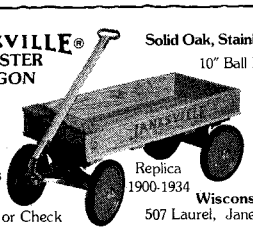

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cination: the kid is going blind, the slasher's razor stands for the eye surgeon's scalpel, and so on. For his directorial début, Peploe, a screenwriter for Bertolucci, Antonioni, and his sister, Clare Peploe (the delightful "High Season"), has recruited a proficient cinematographer, Bruno De Keyzer, and a solid cast, including James Fox, Fanny Ardant, Paul McGann, Clare Holman, and Robert Stephens. Peploe and his co-writer, Frederick Seidel, have drafted the transformations intelligently. The movie was made to be deconstructed. In fact, the press kit contains a six-page exegesis by Peploe's sometime collaborator Peter Wollen, who neatly lists the film's antecedents ("Repulsion," "The Fallen Idol," and, again, "Peeping Tom") and sets down its themes of childhood terrors and the anxiety and paranoia induced by partial vision. But as a dramatic experience, as opposed to "a text," all that "Afraid of the Dark" has to offer is queasiness punctuated by repulsion. And Peploe, like the men behind "Single White Female," indulges in the thriller-maker's version of animal sacrifice: the sole murder victim is a lovable canine named Toby.

I WISH Robert Zemeckis had excised the best twenty-six minutes of "Death Becomes Her" and supplied the HBO anthology "Tales from the Crypt" with a super episode. At its peak, this duelling-bitch comedy, starring Meryl Streep as a Broadway-Hollywood diva, Goldie Hawn as her high-school chum, and Bruce Willis as the plastic surgeon they both desire, achieves a de-luxe variation on the series' macabre slapstick. In passing, the film makes a lot of supposedly savage comments on the Beverly Hills cult of youth and beauty. But the script, by Martin Donovan and David Koepp, which pivots on an immortality potion, is basically an excuse for Streep and Hawn to wallop each other with the aid of flesh-bending special effects. It is a hoot to see Hawn take a shovel and flatten Streep's head into her neck until she looks like an oversized chess queen, but the movie's lines are equally squashed, and the narrative invention is pitiful.

The film kicks off strong, with Streep singing and prancing in a ghastly seventies show called "Songbird," a musical based on "Sweet Bird of Youth." Streep deliriously sends up the kind of narcissistic star who can turn a pelvic tilt into an expression of self-love. Willis has a fine, beaten air as a love-stricken schlub, applauding madly for his perfect woman while most of the listeners walk out. And after Streep steals Willis away, Hawn proves that a comedian can be infectiously depressed: she gains a couple of hundred pounds (courtesy of some clever prostheses) and becomes an entire couch-potato patch, gorging herself as she video-replays Streep's being killed in a suspense film.

It doesn't take long, though, for the primitive plot mechanics to grind away the laughs. There's no logic or preparation for Hawn's reappearance as a svelte, media-hyped author; Zemeckis simply needs a reason for her to move in the same Beverly Hills circles as Streep and Willis. Willis turns alcoholic and changes from a gifted plastic surgeon into a mortuary makeup artist just because the filmmakers need an explanation for his skill at dressing up corpses after Streep and Hawn play rough. Zemeckis's direction is superior to the screenplay. He and his performers keep emphasizing the foolishness of glamour and body-consciousness. But the movie is as hollow and as lacking in spontaneity as its designer zombies. The script even makes the mistake of trying to get us to root for the straight man.

The best reason to see "Death Becomes Her" is Meryl Streep. In this film about women losing control of their bodies, she is more at home in hers than ever before. When the potion lifts her breasts and butt and firms her tummy and she sighs ecstatically, "I'm a girl," you can tell she enjoys being one. But Streep can't alleviate the weight of elaborate failed scenes, such as a party where the living dead are far more dead than alive. In that high-toned zombie jamboree, Zemeckis throws in jokes about rumored-to-be-alive celebrities which would have seemed stale on late-night TV comedy shows two years ago. You half expect Billy Crystal to pop up as the unctuous, face-lifted Fernando and tell the partygoers they look marvellous.

—MICHAEL SRAGOW

•

RAISED EYEBROWS DEPARTMENT

[*From the Philadelphia Northeast News Gleaner*]

He plans to attend Rutgers University in the Fall and will major in Accounting. Upon graduation from college, Andy plans to pursue a corporate accountant.

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BOOKS

Cat Man

THIS review ought to be about a cat, the most illustrious, compelling cat in the history of literature. Bébert was a Montparnasse tabby, born probably in 1935. He met his second master in occupied Paris in late 1942. "Magic itself, tact by wavelength," as his master described him, Bébert was to be left behind when the master and his wife, Lucette, decamped for Germany in the dread spring of '44. Bébert refused separation. He was carried in the travelling sack. The voyage led through lunar bomb craters, strafed rail lines, and cities burning like mad torches. Under bombardment, Bébert, almost starving, became lost, but rediscovered his master and Madame. The trio crossed and recrossed the collapsing Reich. In a last, despairing lunge, they reached Copenhagen. When the Danish police came to arrest the unwelcome guests, Bébert slipped out across a roof. Caught, the legendary beast was caged in a pound at a veterinary clinic. When his master was released from jail and was recuperating, Bébert had to be operated on for a cancerous tumor. "But the Montmartre tom had been around the block. He withstood the trauma and made a speedy recovery, with the slower and wiser serenity of aging cats, faithful, silent, and enigmatic." Amnestied, Bébert's *patron* headed for home at the end of June, 1951. Four lesser cats—Thomine, Poupine, Mouchette, and Flûte—accompanied them on the voyage. Sphinxlike in years, Bébert, the secret sharer, died in a suburb of Paris at the end of 1952. "After many an adventure, jail, bivouac, ashes, all of Europe . . . he died agile and graceful, impeccably, he had jumped out the window that very morning. . . . We, who are born old, look ridiculous in comparison!" So wrote his grieving master, Louis-Ferdinand Destouches, physician, champion of social hygiene among the destitute, wanderer in Africa and the United States, manic crank.

It is Bébert I want to write about—Bébert the arch-survivor and the incarnation of French cunning. But it is a voluminous biography of his wretched owner that I have before me—of that mad doctor who, under the name Céline (taken from his grandmother), produced some of the greatest fiction and documentary "fact-fiction" not only in this century but in the history of Western literature. Bébert would be a joy to report on. Céline is not.

Frédéric Vitoux's "Céline: A Biography," translated, heavy-handedly, by Jesse Browner (Paragon; $34.95), details the Destouches family history and the *misère* of Louis-Ferdinand's parents, living in diverse unsalubrious quarters of Paris before the First World War. It chronicles the bewildering plethora of Louis-Ferdinand's sexual imbroglios, affairs, marriages, and morose peregrinations among the brothels of Paris, London, and colonial Africa. (Dr. Destouches appears to have been a compulsive voyeur, fascinated less by his own sexual experience than by the experiences that his lovers shared with others.) Vitoux is relentlessly informative on his hero's incessant quarrels with publishers, with other writers, with Parisian mundanity. Though it draws heavily on previous chronicles, the coverage of the years of German occupation and of Céline's sardonic, coldly hysterical responses is penetrating. As are the pictures of the hunted fugitive, of the struggle against extradition from Denmark, of the ghostly homecoming. The aura of sanctity that attaches to the deeds of the "slum doctor," of the pathologist struggling against dirt, social injustice, and the ignorance of the destitute, is explored and, to a degree, justified. Frédéric Vitoux argues his brief with tranquil warmth.

Yet the key enigmas remain unresolved. (Shades of the elusive Bébert!) The hallucinatory style with which Céline literally exploded into language and literature when "Journey to the End of Night" appeared, in October, 1932, together with the Jew-hatred first proclaimed in 1937, has always been attributed to a wound Céline suffered on October 27, 1914, when he was on a heroic cavalry mission in Flanders. Céline himself and his apologists cite this wound as the source of the migraines, manic-depressive cycles, and ungoverned rages that subsequently marked Dr. Destouches's private and public pilgrimage as well as the voice and ideology of his writings. The handsome cuirassier, sabre to the wind, had been almost fatally injured, and was thus unhinged into genius and evil. But even Vitoux's careful inventory leaves the facts opaque. It is clear that Sergeant Destouches was wounded in the arm and shoulder, but his captain wrote to Louis's father, "It seems that his wound is not serious." On the other hand, the citation that accom-

"It's been a wonderfully buggy summer, hasn't it?"

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panied the Médaille Militaire awarded him said he was "grievously wounded," and Céline did not return to combat. Was he concussed as he fell from the saddle? Did he endure some psychic shock that thrust him into an abyss of irremediable horror? During convalescence behind the lines, and during the days in London and the Cameroons which ensued, the decorated veteran told of insomnia, of hideous noises in his ears, "whistles . . . drums . . . blasts of steam" that maddened his consciousness. The strategy of apocalyptic pain, of paranoiac suffering and fury, was born. The factual source remains at the unclarified "end of night."

Nor, despite its labored diagnoses, can Vitoux's book throw decisive light on the font and growth of Dr. Destouches's homicidal anti-Semitism. Distaste for Jews ran rife in the French middle and lower middle classes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Dreyfus affair brought latent hatreds into the open. During Céline's years in obscurity, notably at the Clichy clinic, he had noted with rancor the seeming professional and social success of what he took to be a freemasonry of Jewish physicians and literati. His anarchic pacifism—his conviction that France could not survive another bout of mass slaughter—persuaded him that European Jewry was the principal menace: it, and it alone, could by its internationalism, by its opposition to Hitler, plunge the Continent into a second Armageddon. "Above all, war must be avoided," he wrote. "War, for us as we are, means the end of the show, the final tilt into the Jewish charnel house." Like so many of his generation, Destouches the public-health epidemiologist had imbibed diverse fashionable theories on racial pollution and eugenics. Notoriously, the Jew was the bacillus whose resistant ubiquity infected, with miscegenation, the blood (weakened by war) of nobler breeds. And what of the manifest Jewish role in the birth and dissemination of Bolshevism, the red spectre in the East?

However, even if we mix this potent brew, much remains puzzling in the cry for massacre which rings through "Bagatelles pour un Massacre" and "L'École des Cadavres." Adjuring Western civilization to eliminate all Jews—men, women, and children—and to eradicate their very shadow from mankind, Louis-Ferdinand Céline in these voluminous tracts exhibited virtuosities of detestation, of incitement for which there are, fortunately, few analogues in literature and political rhetoric. It is, physically and mentally, well-nigh impossible to read those many hundreds of pages. And yet. As one forces oneself to leaf through this or that passage, the flashes of stylistic genius, of verbal incandescence strike one as might a brusque shiver of light across the sheen of a cesspool. (Coleridge noted the transient sparkle of starlight in his brimming chamber pot.) These writings are not the momentary aberration of a crank lamed in brain and body, visited by tormenting headaches and humming in his ears. Their sick and sickening power is that—momentarily, at least—of "Journey to the End of Night" and of the masterpieces to come.

Two conjectures may be worth making. As in Jonathan Swift, so in Céline the wellspring of imagination, of unleashed eloquence, is hatred. Normally, and in respect of aesthetic form, hatred is short of breath; it does not fill major spaces. But in a handful of masters—Juvenal, Swift, Céline—an enraged misanthropy, a nausea in the face of the world, generates full-scale designs. The monotone of loathing becomes symphonic. As Sartre, a close student of Céline, remarked, there is about the urban Jew something that concentrates to a singular pitch the infirm humanity of man. The Jew is not only human but a touch more human than most. In this murky light, hatred of Jews is the natural distillation of a generalized contempt for the human race. Seeking a visible target for his hatred of human ugliness, corruption, greed, vanity, myopia, Destouches swerved onto the Jew. Put *l'homme* where a demented sentence reads *le youpin* ("the kike"), and you have passages of a Biblical greatness—edicts of damnation issued over the Sodom and Gomorrah we have made of our world.

The second point is harder to get in focus. Céline's private manner and literary work are immersed in a black laughter of Rabelaisian proportions. There is in this Cyclopean mirth the notorious merriment of the medical student at his first cadaver. It has a precedent in the riddling, near-hysterical sendup of the tragic plots (which the audience has just experienced) in the Greek satyr plays. Dante lets drop a few mordant jests in Hell. Franz Kafka, having read his "Metamorphosis" to an appalled, speechless group of intimates, doubled over with helpless hilarity. It is at some bizarre level possible to apprehend Céline's anti-Semitic outpourings as parodistic, as some sort of practical joke gone mad. A surrealist clowning, a death's-head Mexican carnival are not far off. "Guignol's Band" is a characteristic Céline title; the "massacre" goes with the "bagatelle" (a word that Céline took to originally signify the tricks and turns of a buffoon or mountebank). A guest at a glittering assemblage of Nazi masters and collaborators, the unkempt Céline did an imitation of Hitler; at the climax, a ranting Führer assured the Jews that he was herding them into camps only so that he might more readily come to a secret agreement with them and share world hegemony. In short, there could be near the rabid heart of Céline's dance for genocide a deranged tomfoolery, the impishness of a child vandal. This is no apologia. It may well make matters worse.

Céline's flight and exile occasioned two further classics. "Castle to Castle" narrates the grotesque twilight of the Vichy regime in Sigmaringen, an operetta town set aside by the retreating Germans for their unwelcome guests. The famous telegraphic and filmic techniques that made the "Journey" a pivot in modern fiction and prose are fiercely compacted here. As only great works of art can, "Castle to Castle" realizes a supreme concision within an extended, open-ended construct. (Observe the economy, the elision, and the breadth in the counter-grammatical French title, "D'un Château l'Autre.") The depiction of Pétain's miniature court in Sigmaringen Castle between November, 1944, and March, 1945, is incomparable in its hollow laughter. When we follow the scene in which a lone R.A.F. fighter, droning overhead, threatens to scatter the Maréchal's quaking retinue during a ceremonious morning constitutional—Pétain himself, of course, continued to promenade upright, unflinching and cretinously majestic—the sense of a Shakespearean register in Céline becomes insistent.

Here, as in Shakespeare's history

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plays, the pageant and the proximate ordure, the magnificence of sovereign postures and the underbelly of common need, the monumental and the intimate interact in counterpoint. Here, also, no less than in the masters of the sixteenth century (Montaigne, Rabelais, Shakespeare), a peculiar sensuality of thought is at work: Céline modulates the complex dynamics of political and social debacle into smell, into sound, into the touch of skin and fabric. The despair of the condemned hooligans, the heightened erotic compulsions of fugitives on the rim of the abyss literally leave a taste in Céline's, and the reader's, mouth. And, far more than Shakespeare, Céline uses the electrified sensibility of animals, Bébert first and foremost, to enrich the range of perceptions. (Hence the marvellous encounter between Field Marshal von Rundstedt and Tomcat von Bébert in "Rigodon," the weakest of the three memoirs of exile.) "North" takes up the wild narration of escape, hiding, and Danish incarceration. It excoriates the trial that Céline was subject to in absentia and his official relegation to national disgrace: "Ministers, satraps, Dien-Pen-Hu everywhere! tail-turning and pink underwear!" Vitoux believes that "North" is perhaps Céline's greatest book. Unquestionably, it contains visions of Inferno—of human decomposition on the spectral flatlands of Brandenburg, in blazing Berlin, at the Danish border, and in the papier-mâché aura of Elsinore—that border on Dante. The panoramas of the apocalyptic in Günter Grass, in William Burroughs, in Norman Mailer, and also in the most convincing Vietnam War films and in the journalistic vignettes of black skies over Kuwait all come after Céline.

The preludes to his art are less evident. Rabelais is always invoked. "King Lear" and "Timon of Athens" may have mattered, together with the insight that there are elective affinities between Shakespeare's clowns and his sadists, between Falstaff and Iago, between Malvolio and his merry tormentors. Dostoyevski remains a possibility. He was much read, dramatized, and imitated in the Paris of the twenties and thirties. Something of the oracular sweep of Victor Hugo's leviathan novels and historical-philosophical epic poems seems to have resonance in the "Journey." There is the elusive background noise of Rimbaud's lyric

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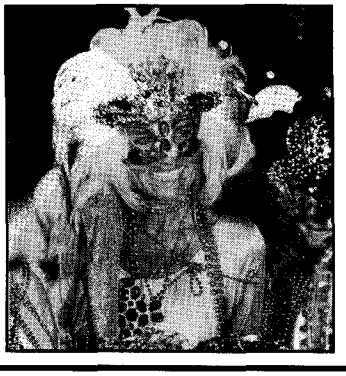

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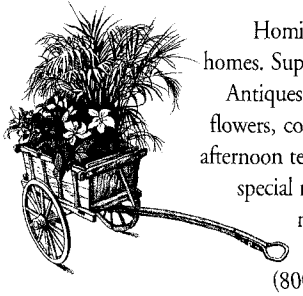

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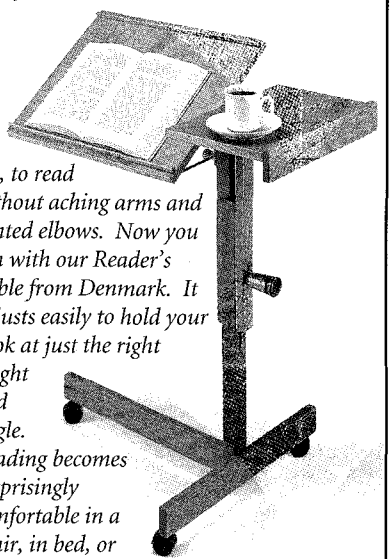

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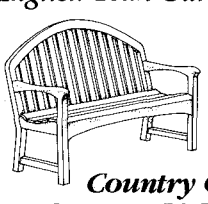

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execrations. On the whole, however, a pedantic hunt for precedents is futile. "Journey to the End of Night" poured lavalike out of the deeps and crust of language as these had been dislocated by world war. In a Europe in which upward of twenty thousand men had been pounded to mud in a single day of battle, in which a third of a million corpses lay unburied between the lines at Verdun, traditional discourse, the similes of reason, the stabilities of the literate imagination had become a mockery. The shrill in Céline's ear somehow brought with it the new grammars of hysteria, of mass propaganda, of self-deafening. The rock beat, the hammering of heavy metal, of sound as a drug, first detonate inside language in the "Journey." Their suffocating echo has not ceased.

But the bigger question nags. Does aesthetic creativity, even of the first order, ever justify the favorable presentation of, let alone systematic incitement to, inhumanity? Can there be literature worth publication, study, critical esteem which suggests racism, which makes attractive or urges the sexual use of children? (Dostoyevski stands at the edge of this very penumbra.) The liberal case against all censorship is often cant. If serious literature and the arts can educate sensibility, exalt our perceptions, refine our moral discriminations, they can, by exactly the same token, deprave, cheapen, and make bestial our imaginings and mimetic impulses. I have wrestled with this conundrum during some forty years of reading, writing, and teaching. The Céline "case" (as Henry James might have called it, with unquiet fascination) is exemplary either way. By comparison, Ezra Pound's cracker-barrel Fascism, the deeply incised anti-Semitism of T. S. Eliot, and W. H. Auden's call for "the necessary murder" (this time at behest of the left) are thin stuff. It is the sheer weight of Céline's racist vituperations, their material summons to slaughter, the absence of any but fitful or sardonic regrets, inwoven with a structural genius for psychological revelation and dramatic narrative, that press the question. Would that Vitoux had faced these issues.

As luck would have it, the naked savageries come after the "Journey" and do not disfigure, except in an almost farcical, perhaps deliberately loony guise, the best of "Castle to Castle" and of "North." It is these inventions which, rightly, secured Céline's inclusion in the Pléiade edition, apex of the French Parnassus, at the time of his death. Nonetheless, there is no escaping the gargantuan trash of the middle years or the unison of hatred, of contempt for woman and Jew, at the backbone of Céline's achievement. In his case, at least, we make out the causal relations, all too taut, between the man and his creations. The dilemma posed by his admirer, contemporary, and fellow-collaborator Lucien Rebatet is even thornier. Both the Germans and Vichy found Céline an embarrassment—they could make nothing of his lacerating drolleries. Rebatet was a true killer, a hunter-down of Jews, Resistance fighters, and Gaullists. Waiting for execution (he was subsequently amnestied), Rebatet completed "Les Deux Étendards" (as yet untranslated into English). This ample novel is among the hidden masterpieces of our time. It is, moreover, a book of unfailing humanity, brimful of music (Rebatet was for a spell France's foremost music critic), of love, of insight into pain. The young woman at the pivot of the tale is no less informed by the radiant pressures of maturing life than is the Natasha of "War and Peace." What can possibly give us any intelligible grasp of the connections between the abject, twisted Rebatet and the wonders of his fiction? Where are the bridges in the labyrinth of that soul?

I have no answers. My instinct is that "Death on the Installment Plan" and the "Bagatelles" should molder in library stacks. Recent reissues strike me as an unforgivable exploitation for political or market reasons. The great "fact-fictions" stand. Their wild song makes the language live and makes it new. The man Destouches remains inexcusable. But even on this point Bébert might beg to differ.

—George Steiner

•

NO, THANKS DEPARTMENT

[*From the Keene (N.H.) Sentinel*]

Spicy Teriyaki Marinade

1/2 cup soy sauce
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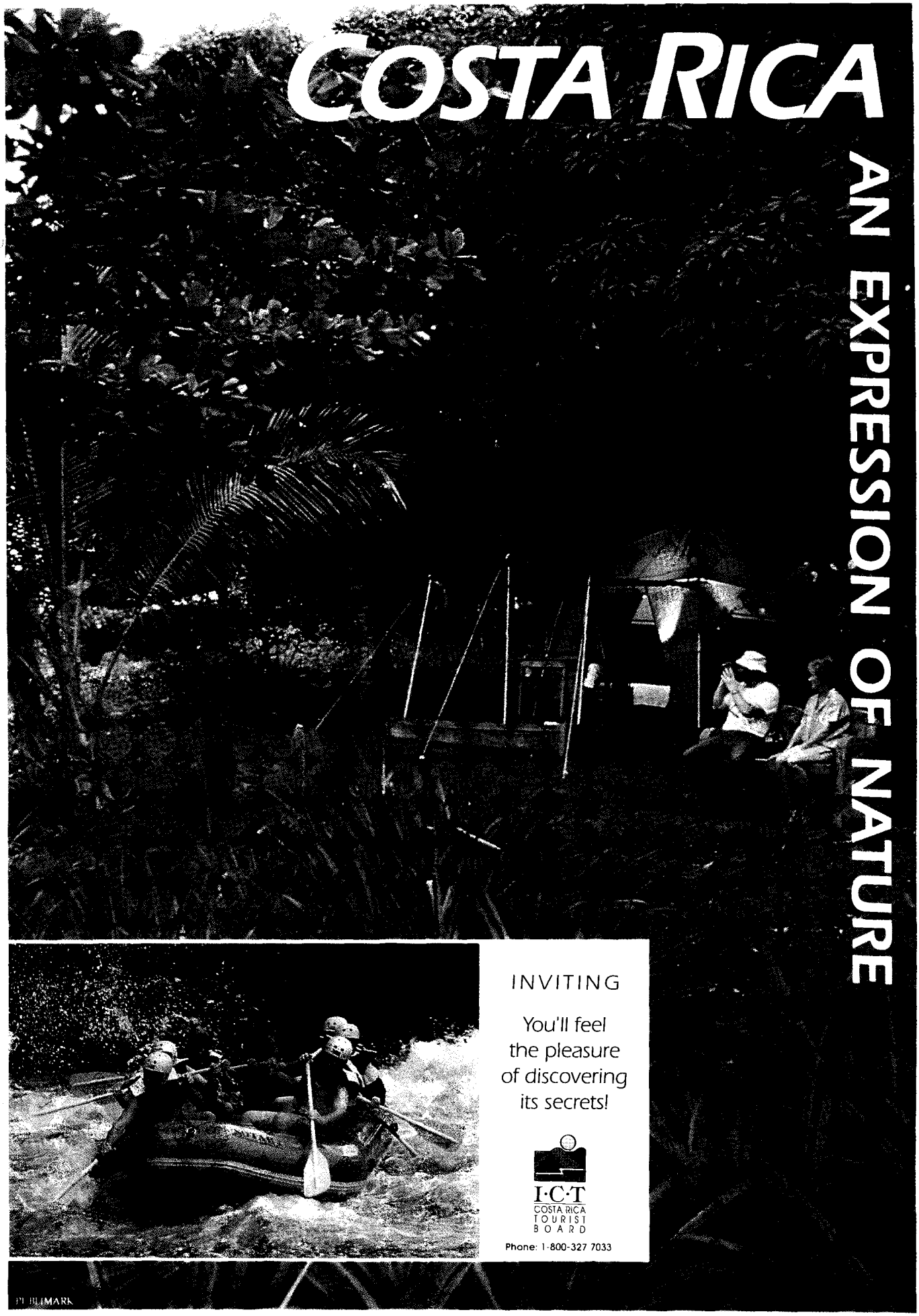

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